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PLUCK AND LUCK.

**HAL HOWE, THE BOY REPORTER;
OR, A SHARP LAD'S WORK FOR A GREAT NEWSPAPER.**

By RICHARD R. MONTGOMERY.



He reached the eager, outstretched hands of the firemen with his helpless burden. Old Mary was saved, but Hal fell like a dead and lifeless weight into the friendly arms all ready to receive him.

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PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure.

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HAL HOWE, THE BOY REPORTER

OR,

A Sharp Lad's Work for a Great Newspaper

By Richard R. Montgomery

CHAPTER I.

HAL LOSES A SITUATION.

Only the click of the typewriter keys, under the deft white hands of Jennie Marlow, a sweet-faced girl of seventeen, broke the silence in the office of Jerome Cadman, the Wall street broker, that bright, pleasant spring day.

Jennie Marlow was alone in the office, for the clerks and old Jerome Cadman, the broker, had gone out for lunch, and Ralph, the only son of the veteran of the street, had not appeared at the office at all that day.

This was nothing unusual, however, for young Ralph was going the pace that kills, and business became a secondary consideration with him when it interfered with his dissipation.

Presently the sound of the typewriter ceased, as Jennie finished the work upon which she was engaged, and as she leaned back in her chair she took a photograph from her bosom, and looked fondly at the pictured face of a bright, resolute-looking and handsome youth of probably about eighteen years of age.

"Dear Hal," she murmured. "How life-like your picture looks. It seems to me that I can read in your face that you will yet make your way in the world as you have often said you would, for my sake."

Hal Howe, who was the subject of pretty Jennie's pleasant thoughts, was a young clerk employed in Jerome Cadman's office. There he and the young girl had first met.

They were both brave and true hearted young bread winners in the busy city of New York. Poverty for them had been a hard task master, but their hearts were not embittered in the struggle. Each had loved ones to care for, and each was ever loyal to the best impulses of their young hearts, and so they had been drawn together, so they loved.

The gentle wind coming in at the open window, blew the golden curls about Jennie's fair head, and the bright sunbeams played upon her smiling face, while her great blue eyes continued to dwell upon the likeness of her boyish sweetheart.

But suddenly she started and thrust Hal Howe's picture out of sight, for the sound of unsteady footsteps in the passage beyond the closed door had broken the spell of the day dream, which had occupied her mind.

The mutterings of a harsh, thick voice came from the pas-

sage, and a look of unpleasant, and indeed alarmed anticipation, banished the smile from Jennie Marlow's face.

Then the door opened, and a tall, fashionably dressed young man, with a dark, haggard face, upon which the life that he had led had set its dissipated lines entered.

He lurched a little in his walk as he came toward Jennie.

"By jove, you know, Jennie, my dear—Miss Marlow, I mean—I'm in luck to find you alone, and now you must hear what I started to say to you the other day," he said, while the bold, admiring glance which he bestowed upon the young lady caused her cheeks to flush, and she sprang up and retreated behind a great desk.

"I do not want to hear you. I told you never to speak to me in that way again, Mr. Cadman. I am going out now!" Jennie cried, snatching her hat from a hook on the wall, and suddenly making a movement to pass the broker's son.

But he barred her passage to the door with outstretched arms.

"You must hear me; I love you, I'm rich, I'll make a lady of you," he said, and as he advanced Jennie uttered an alarmed cry, again seeking the shelter of the desk.

The voice of the frightened girl penetrated beyond the closed door, and it was heard by one who was approaching that portal.

In a moment the door was dashed open, and Hal Howe entered quickly.

At one glance he seemed to understand the whole situation. Jennie's pale and frightened face told its own story. Ralph Cadman's looks and attitude were eloquent to tell of his part in the scene.

"Oh, Hal! I'm so glad you have come, I want to leave the office!" cried Jennie.

"But I object to your going until you have heard all I have to say. And as for you, Howe, you get out and be quick about it. I'm master here—when the gov'nor's out, anyhow!" said Ralph, turning upon Hal, and speaking in the most insolent and overbearing tone.

Hal Howe's handsome, boyish face flushed hotly, and he retorted:

"Get out of the way and let the lady pass! You are not yourself, and you are not acting like a gentleman!"

"You say I'm no gentleman, eh? I'll show you! I'll break your head!" cried Ralph, in ugly tones, and he advanced at Hal with fists raised.

But the latter gave him a tremendous push, and he went reeling backward, stumbled and fell, striking his head on a corner of a desk as he went down, and overturning a tin box full of papers, which Hal had seen Cadman, Sr., take from the safe half an hour earlier, before he left the office.

Ralph Cadman lay stunned where he had fallen, and, taking Jennie's hand, Hal said:

"You can go now. He will not trouble you further at present."

"Yes, yes, I'll go, and I'll never come back. I'm afraid of that man," she said, flashing a glance at the prostrate figure of the broker's son.

Just then Hal saw a name written upon one of the bundles of papers which Ralph had brought to the floor, which startled him.

"James Marlow, your lost father's name! Oh, Jennie, what can this mean? See! see!" excitedly exclaimed Hal, picking up the package of documents.

The young couple had turned their backs upon the door, and they heard not the habitually soft and cat-like footsteps of Jerome Cadman, the old broker, as he came to the door.

As Hal snatched up the papers the broker stood framed in the door, white-faced, trembling, clearly the victim of sudden and intense alarm.

His dilating eyes were fixed upon the papers in the hands of his young clerk.

Under his breath he was saying:

"How could I have forgotten to put the tin box back in the safe?"

But Jerome Cadman was a man of action, and he had the name of being a desperate one upon occasion. Wall street veterans, who knew that he had been involved in some shady transactions, preferred not to say anything upon the subject that might reach the hearing of the old broker.

Hal Howe had barely time to read the words, "Letters relating to James Marlow," which were written upon the package, which fate itself had brought to his notice, when the documents were snatched from his hand.

He turned to see them in the grasp of his employer. The latter glared at the lad and his girlish companion.

"What do you mean? How dare you meddle with my private papers?" thundered the irate broker.

Hal began to explain, but he was interrupted by Ralph, who, regaining his senses, cried out:

"He assaulted me! Discharge the young ruffian, father!"

"Yes, I'll do that. Howe, you are discharged. Go at once. I won't have a Paul Pry in my office," the old broker said, in an angry voice.

"You need not take the trouble to discharge me. I had decided to discharge myself, and Miss Marlow leaves, too," said Hal, coolly, and giving Jennie his arm he walked out with his head in the air.

On the street, Hal said:

"Now, I'll see you home, Jennie, and on the way I wish you would tell me the story of your poor father again. Some way, I can't get the idea out of my head that the papers or letters which Cadman snatched from me should be in your hands."

Jennie started as she replied:

"You must surely remember the sad story and the mystery of it all. My father was a bank messenger, a trusted man, and I know he was the soul of honesty and honor. There has never been any question of that in the minds of my mother or myself. It was years ago—a day like the terrible Black Friday of Wall street, when speculation drove men mad, and millions were lost and won in an hour. That day my father was sent

from his bank with fifty thousand dollars in bank notes, which he was intrusted to deliver to a certain great financial magnate of Wall street. Father never reached the office which was his destination, and from that day to this nothing has ever been heard of him or the money which was intrusted to him. The police believe he absconded with the money, but my poor mother and I know he must have met with foul play—that he was robbed and murdered."

For a moment Hal was silent after Jennie ceased speaking. He seemed to see the pale, frightened face of Jerome Cadman before him again as he reflected.

"Jennie," he said, at length, "if Jerome Cadman knows anything about your father, I believe he wants to keep it a secret. His conduct has aroused suspicions in my mind. I shall never forget what has happened to-day. In such cases as that of your father, the truth almost always comes out some time, and if I can I'll help to clear your father's name."

Jennie replied half tearfully, thanking the lad, but evidently not daring to hope that the mystery was to be cleared up in the future.

They took a car on Broadway, and Hal did not leave Jennie until they arrived at the house on a respectable east side street, in which the young girl and her invalid mother dwelt in cheap rooms.

"I don't know what I shall do or what will become of poor mother if I do not get another situation at once. We have no money to speak of saved, and it's very hard to get work in New York now. There are hundreds of girl stenographers and typewriters out of employment," said Jennie, despondently, as they reached the door of her humble home.

"Don't despair, Jennie; I'll help you if I can. You know I have learned shorthand by study and practice at night, and you know it's my ambition to become a journalist—a newspaper editor. The first step is to get a reporter's place on the staff of some great city daily newspaper, and to-morrow I'm going to try my best to get such a place. I've a good high school education, and if I only get a chance I'm bound to make my way."

Very brave and noble looked the ambitious lad, and Jennie was proud of him, but when he walked away, after a few tender words of parting, he could not help feeling that it would be a difficult thing to get a reporter's position on the staff of a great city newspaper, because he had no experience, and had no one to use influence in his behalf. He knew the city was full of experienced newspaper men, and he supposed the supply far exceeded the demand for their services.

"But I'll try, and I'll do my best," said Hal, with grim determination.

That was the key note of his character. He had true grit.

Hal and his only near living relative, a sister, who had been a mother to him, and who was the dearest "old maid" in the world, occupied rooms on an uptown street, and half an hour later the lad was at home telling his sister all about the events of the day. There were tears in Mildred Howe's poor, tired eyes, as she placed her hand upon her brother's dark curls caressingly, and spoke encouragingly of his future.

The fond sister was a seamstress who sewed at home for a fashionable uptown dressmaker.

The next morning, true to his determination, Hal Howe started out bravely to look for a situation as a newspaper reporter.

CHAPTER II.

HAL GETS AN ACCIDENTAL "ASSIGNMENT."

Hal Howe went directly down to Park Row, near City Hall Park, where the offices of so many of the great metropolitan newspapers are located.

Crossing along Chambers street, from Broadway, he was almost run into by a spruce-looking, keen-eyed, and shrewd-faced young man, who was scratching away on a reporter's pad as he walked.

"Beg your pardon," said the pre-occupied man of the pad and pencil, without looking up.

But Hal instantly knew him. He remembered he had seen him in the reporter's stand in the Stock Exchange, many a time.

"Here's a man who might give me a good tip as to how to get what I'm after. He's a reporter sure. I wonder if he'd help me?"

This idea flashed upon Hal's mind by the time the newspaper man had passed him.

Turning, he went after the reporter.

In a moment the latter put his pad and pencil in his pocket and quickened his pace.

But he was immediately overtaken by the lad.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, coming up alongside of the other, "can I speak with you for a moment on business?"

The reporter paused and faced Hal, looking him over with his sharp eyes as he said with a smile:

"I'm always open for business in my line. I don't seem to remember you, though."

"But I know you—that is, by sight. I've seen you in the Stock Exchange. You are a journalist, a reporter, I believe."

"You've hit it the first time, my lad," came the answer in genial tones.

"I'm Jack Bannister of The Daily Earth staff. Now, what is it? Time is money with us fellows, though we don't always cash it in," he added.

Hal began to talk fast, and his eager face and earnest manner told of his sincerity.

"I'm looking for a job—for a place as a reporter on some city daily, and—and I thought maybe you wouldn't mind telling me how to go about it the best way," he said.

"Oh, ho! another candidate for hard work and struggles! My boy, I like your looks, but let me tell you right now, unless you have some special fitness for the work, you'd better turn to almost anything else than newspaper work. There's room enough at the top, of course, but it's a hard road to get there, and a long one, too," said Jack Bannister, in his ready, off-hand way, but evidently with the utmost sincerity.

"I think I could make my way. Do tell me how to go about it," replied Hal, in a modest manner.

"You live here in the city, I take it?"

"Yes, sir."

"How about schooling?"

"I have graduated at the city high school."

"Know anything about reporting? But, no, I understand, from what you said, you have not had any experience. Do you understand stenography—shorthand, you know?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Step in here."

The reporter led the way into the entrance of a public building. Handing Hal his pad and pencil, he said:

"Now, shorthand what I say."

Hal took the writing material, and the reporter began to talk fast.

"This is a test. I must do my best," thought the lad, and he fairly made his pencil fly.

"Let's have a look at it," said Bannister, when he had rattled away at random for five minutes.

Hal handed over the pad.

The reporter quickly ran over what the youth had written in the mystic characters of stenography.

"Good! You'll do on shorthand. Of course, a knowledge of it is not absolutely essential, and there are a good many re-

porters who can't write it. But it's a big help. Now, while there's not one chance in ten that he'll do anything for you, because our staff is more than full, I'll go to the office of the Daily Earth with you and introduce you to the city editor. Come along," said Bannister, when he had read the test writing.

He set his face toward Park Row and Hal followed him there.

In a few moments he was in the presence of the city editor, and was introduced to that gentleman.

Hal was never at loss for words, and he proceeded to make his wants and wishes known. He spoke with the fervor and enthusiasm of youth and hope.

The old editor felt a kindly sympathetic feeling for the bright-faced, ambitious boy, and the memory of his own youth, and his early aspirations and struggles quickened his interest in the lad, who was knocking at the portal of journalistic life so eagerly.

"I wish there was an opening for you, my lad, but there is not. We already have more competent men on our staff than we really need, and the proprietor is seriously thinking of dispensing with some of them," he said kindly, regretfully.

Hal's face fell, and in spite of himself his eyes became a little misty.

"Never say die! You can try the other newspapers. I'm pretty well known in all the offices, and I'll give you a general note of introduction to present to all," said Bannister, in an undertone.

Hal bade the city editor a respectful good-day, and a little later he had the reporter's promised note in his pocket.

"Well, I have met with disappointment at the start, but I won't give up until I've tried every newspaper in the city," determined Hal, as he presently stood alone on the street before the tall, imposing building of the Daily Earth.

He felt that, after all, he had been somewhat in luck, since he had obtained Jack Bannister's letter of introduction.

And feeling his breast pocket from time to time, to make sure he had the precious note safely there, Hal set out again to make the rounds of the newspaper offices.

Many an experienced man has found that a dreary disappointing task, and poor Hal met with such an experience.

Everywhere his services were declined, but in every office Jack Bannister's note obtained for him a hearing.

He heard flattering comments made about Jack Bannister. Newspaper men said Jack was a "hustler and an A 1 newspaper man."

How the lad envied the successful reporter! How happy he fancied he would be if he could ever get half such a reputation!

But in spite of his ambition, his determination and grit, Hal was pretty well discouraged when night came and he had visited every prominent newspaper only to meet with disheartening rejection of his tendered services. Hal's sister tried to cheer him up when he came home, and before they parted for the night, the lad said, bravely:

"Well, sister Mildred, as it seems I cannot get to be a reporter now, to-morrow I'll try to get a position in some office. Of course, Cadman won't give me a recommendation, but I have a good one from the insurance agent whom I worked for before I went to Cadman. But I've not given up the hope of getting to be a reporter and a journalist some day."

About noon the following day Hal was crossing Broadway, when a man who was dashing recklessly across the street ahead of him was run down by a van.

The policeman at the crossing picked the unfortunate man up, and a crowd gathered. The injured man was carried into a nearby drug store, and a hospital ambulance was telephoned for. Hal caught a glimpse of the pale face of the victim of

the accident, and saw that he was Jack Bannister, his reporter friend.

"The man's leg is broken and he's badly bruised," Hal heard the policeman say, and going into the drug store he caught the eyes of the reporter.

He had not fainted, and recognizing Hal he called him to his side, and when the lad had come close, he whispered:

"This is mighty hard luck for me. I was off to make a big 'scoop'—to get a good thing for my paper ahead of any other in the city. If you'll help me we may save the scoop yet. Will you do it?"

"Yes, yes. What am I to do?" answered Hal, excitedly.

Bannister whispered to him for some moments.

Then he thrust his pencil and reporter's pad into the lad's eager hand.

Hal shot out of the drug store, feeling as if he wanted to fairly fly. At last he was going to do the work of a reporter—by proxy.

Bannister had told him that the last night a man who had been the leader in a great bank robbery had been arrested. There had been a fight, and the criminal was supposed to be fatally wounded. He had admitted his guilt, and the chief-of-police had privately notified Bannister, who was a personal friend, that he thought the reporter could get the whole thrilling, sensational story of the great robbery from the guilty man.

The reporter was on his way to see the latter when he was run down on the street.

Hal had full instructions as to what to do, and he was now on his way to make a great newspaper scoop—to get a story ahead of all the other reporters, such as had before now made the fame of an unknown man in the newspaper world in a single day.

CHAPTER III.

THE BOY REPORTER IN A TIGHT PLACE.

Following Bannister's instructions to the letter, Hal went to police headquarters at No. 300 Mulberry street, and saw the chief in person.

Having explained his mission to the officer, who seemed surprised to learn that Bannister had entrusted such an important task to a mere lad, Hal was provided with the necessary credentials which obtained for him admission to the prison hospital, to which the criminal whom he wished to interview had been taken.

There was now no reason why the police desired to keep the story of the great robbery from the public, of course, or the chief would not have sent word about it to Bannister.

The lad was allowed to see the wounded criminal alone. He made him certain promises of pecuniary reward, in Bannister's name, as he had been told to do.

It happened that Bannister had formerly been a police reporter, and he was pretty well known to the criminal classes, and had among them the reputation of always doing just as he agreed to do.

The bank burglar said, as soon as Hal made known that he was sent by Bannister to get the story of the great robbery:

"All right, young feller. They say I've got to croak, but I want my wife to get the money the fly newspaper bloak, Bannister, has promised me, and I know he'll give it to her."

Then, while Hal took down his statement verbatim in shorthand, the burglar told the interesting, thrilling story of one of the greatest bank robberies of the age.

Hal hastened from the prison hospital as soon as he had the whole story on paper. His heart beat fast. He was intensely elated, for he knew he had accomplished the great task which had been assigned him.

He knew to what hospital Bannister was taken, and he made the best possible time in getting there.

Upon his arrival he found the injured reporter resting comfortably on a clean white cot, in the cool, neat "accident ward."

Bannister's broken leg had been set, and he was ready to talk with Hal.

"I've got it. I've got the whole story of the great robbery!" cried the lad, as he came to Bannister's side, and he pulled out the stenographic report of the burglar's statement.

"Good! Bravo! We'll beat 'em all! I won't detain you a moment. Go to the office of my paper. Tell the city editor what you've got, and he'll set you to writing out the shorthand notes. By the time you get through with the last page of the copy the rest of it will be on the press, and it will be the great feature of the afternoon edition—they may get out an extra," Bannister hastened to say.

Hal was off a moment after that, and it turned out just as Bannister said.

There was exultation and rejoicing in the office of the Daily Earth when Hal came in and announced that he had Bannister's big "scoop" in his pocket.

The city editor not only set Hal to writing out the shorthand notes, but put several other experts on the same task, so that the whole story was on the press in a very short time.

And the newsboys were soon on the streets, crying:

"Extra Earth! Full account of the great Bellville Bank robbery from the confession of the burglar chief!"

But Hal very modestly gave Bannister all the credit. He said, when the city editor complimented him:

"Mr. Bannister is entitled to all the honor. But for his accident he would have made the 'scoop,' as you call it, without help from me."

But the lad found himself quite a hero in the opinion of the Earth staff, and the city editor slipped a twenty-five dollar check in his hand, saying:

"We always appreciate good work, my lad, and you deserve this money. In view of the proof you have given of your enterprise and ability I will recall my refusal to employ you. I will place your name on my list of reporters, and give you such space work from time to time as I may be able to find for you."

Hal's heart leaped to his throat, and his voice was broken as he thanked the editor.

It seemed to him he was walking on the air as he went home with the twenty-five dollar check in his pocket.

"I'm the luckiest boy in the world! I've won the first step in a newspaper career," said he, in joyful tone, as his sister Mildred met him at the door.

For Hal and Mildred that was indeed a happy evening, and, of course, Hal had to tell his sister everything.

Then he went to call on Jennie Marlow, and the young girl rejoiced with him. In the twilight the young couple were seated at a front window when, hearing the rattling of wheels, Hal glanced into the street.

A cab was passing, and the youth gave a quick start as he saw Ralph Cadman, the son of the Wall street broker, and a villainous looking man whom he had never seen before, in the vehicle.

While Hal looked, he saw Cadman point out Jennie's home to his companion. The other nodded, and an evil smile curled his lips, but the cab passed quickly.

Jennie, too, had recognized Ralph Cadman, but the gloom in the room had probably hidden her and Hal from the sight of the occupants of the cab.

"That man with the stranger in the cab was Ralph Cadman. He pointed at this house. Oh, Hal, I fear he means to

pursue me with his hateful attentions," said Jennie, as the youth turned to her.

"If he does he will have to answer to me," responded Hal.

"No, no; I may be wrong! Do not have any trouble with him. He is a dangerous man. I know he already hates you, and I believe he would like to do you an injury," Jennie hastened to say.

For a long time the young lovers talked, and Hal's success made him paint their future in bright and glowing colors. It was late when he started for home, and as he was passing the entrance of an alley a ragged street urchin, who was a type of the shrewd gamins of New York, darted out and accosted him.

Hal knew the lad. He was called Tom Tatters, and he sold Newspapers in Wall street.

"I say, cully, Special Jim, de extra newspaper man, gimme de tip dat youse was on de Earth reportin' gang, an' as you done me a good turn dat time I was broke an' sick last winter, I'se goin' to give yer de straight tip on suffin' dat de paper may want to git holt of, see?" said Tom Tatters, placing a detaining hand on Hal's arm.

"What is it, Tom?" replied Hal, interested at once.

"Youse know de Hamilton Bank? Well, de house next it has been empty fer some time, but 'cause I've been bünkin' in de alley aside of it nights, I've dropped to it dat there's suthin' crooked goin' on in de cellar of dat empty house."

"How so?" asked Hal, eagerly.

"I've seed men sneakin' in at de outside cellar door in de alley, an' I've heard 'em at work. Queer sounds dey were, too—like diggin' an chiselin' on stone."

"All right, Tom. Much obliged. I'll investigate, and I won't forget you if your tip comes to anything," said Hal, and when they had exchanged a few more words the boy reporter went on.

He changed his course and went toward the bank and the empty house.

It was a dark night, and when, at length, Hal glided into the alley beside the unoccupied dwelling next the bank, he saw no one near, and he believed that no one had seen him.

He made his way along cautiously until he came to a small basement door. He had just paused there when he heard someone moving inside the door. Hal beat a noiseless retreat beyond the door, but he halted in the darkness, as he heard the door open and a ray of light from it shot out.

He saw a man come out, and the light from within revealed his face. Hal was much surprised, as he saw that the man was the villainous looking fellow whom he had seen with Ralph Cadman in the cab that evening.

Closing the door, the man walked toward the mouth of the alley. In a moment Hal reached the portal and found it was not fastened. Chance seemed to have given him an opportunity to penetrate the mystery. No sound came from within. Curiosity prompted Hal, and the desire to get a story for his paper urged him on. In a moment he glided through the door. He found himself in an ordinary, unfurnished basement. A lantern, standing on a barrel, lighted up the place.

A glance told him the room was deserted, but he saw something which thrilled him. There was a large hole drilled half way through the wall which separated the basement from the vault of the bank, and upon the floor he saw the tools with which the secret work had been done.

Hal had barely made this discovery when he heard footsteps at the alley door.

Darting into a shadowy corner he crouched down behind a barrel that stood there, and the next moment the man whom he had seen go out came in, followed by three others. The door was locked and one of the men took away the key.

The young reporter's heart beat fast as he realized that he

was shut in with desperate bank robbers, and that discovery meant death.

CHAPTER IV.

HAL MAKES HIS ESCAPE FROM THE BASEMENT.

"Well, I've got myself into a pretty tight place. But there's a chance yet that the burglars may not find me here. Now to keep cool and try to find out all I can about these rascals," thought Hal as he crouched behind the barrel and mentally pulled himself together.

Meanwhile, the men set to work to penetrate further into the thick wall of masonry, which alone stood between them and the bank vault.

And Hal soon heard one of the trio speak to the man whom he had seen with Ralph Cadman in the cab.

The fellow called his confederate—who seemed indeed to be the leading spirit of the party—Roderick.

From the conversation which ensued, Hal soon gathered that the gang figured on reaching the bank vault in which they hoped to find a large sum of money on the following night—provided, of course, that they were not interfered with in the meantime.

Hal soon regained his natural coolness and composure.

"It's lucky that the rascals can't get through the wall to-night, for if I can only get out of this undetected I'll have time to spoil their game, and what a corking story I'll have for my paper, exclusively," he reflected.

But his attention was almost immediately taken by some remarks which were made by Roderick.

"I've got a little job for a swell bloke on hand for to-morrow. It's a bit risky, but it will pay. The bloke who engaged me will come down with the coin handsomely. It's only to snap up a girl, and take her where she'll be in his power."

"Ah, I'll wager I know why Ralph Cadman pointed out Jennie's house to Roderick. The scoundrel has engaged the crook to abduct Jennie," Hal decided.

"She shall be warned and guarded—if I can escape. And I must—I will get out of this. There is now something dearer than life for me at stake," the devoted lad thought.

Hal had estimated the character of the old broker's rascally son aright, and he was sure there was nothing which Ralph would hesitate to do to accomplish his own evil ends, if he fancied he could secure himself against the consequences.

Jennie had told him some time before they left the service of the broker that, when perfectly sober, Ralph Cadman had offered to make her his wife, and that he had assured her that he had his father's willing consent.

Knowing the mercenary character of Ralph and his father and that Cadman senior had often said his son should make only a wealthy match, Hal suspected something in the way of a mystery was at the bottom of the desire of father and son to make Jennie the wife of the latter.

The youth reflected, as he listened to the further talk of the burglars, which was not important, that strange and improbable as it seemed, father and son must believe there was wealth to be won by bringing about the marriage of the poor typewriter girl with the latter.

But Jennie had assured Hal that she had no expectations; that, so far as she knew, she had no wealthy relative, that there was no source from which a fortune might yet come to her.

And so the matter was a mystery to the young lovers.

The bank burglars had been at work at the wall for upwards of half an hour, while, of course, the boy reporter continued to watch them and listen attentively to all they said, and yet nothing had occurred to cause him new alarm.

But finally the burglars ceased their work for a resting spell, and one of them said:

"I'll get the pipes and tobacco." We may as well have a smoke while we are resting. Haven't done so much work in a year. The pals say I'm too strong to work. Haw!" and laughing gruffly, the fellow strode straight toward the barrel behind which Hal was concealed.

He had seen a box of tobacco and some clay pipes on the floor near the barrel, when he crept behind it.

The lad's heart leaped to his throat, and a thrill of intense alarm went through his nerves. He expected the burglar would see him when he reached the barrel.

Hal was unarmed, and he knew that even if he had a weapon he would stand no show at all in a fight against the four desperate men with whom he was locked in.

The youth was brave enough, but the peril of the situation was so imminent that the stoutest hearted man would have been intensely alarmed.

The suspense of the moment which elapsed as the burglar crossed to the barrel in the shadowy corner, tried Hal's nerves cruelly.

But he was not fated to be discovered. Providence destined him for brilliant work for a great newspaper. The burglar did not see him.

With the box of tobacco and the pipes in his hands the fellow went back to his pals, and the fumes of the narcotic weed soon filled the basement.

Hal felt like shouting for joy when the immediate danger was past, and he began to think how he should get out if the burglars went away and left him locked in.

Then he saw that two small windows, high in the wall, toward the alley whence he had come, were covered with strips of carpet to shut in the light. He supposed, of course, the windows were covered with iron bars, and the idea occurred to him that the basement might become his prison, until the gang came back to complete the task of getting into the bank vault.

He wished he had brought Tom Tatters with him, and that he had left the shrewd street urchin in the alley, when he went into the basement.

In a short time the four crooks put their pipes aside, and the work upon the wall was again resumed.

Toward morning, without having discovered Hal, the men all left the basement, and the youth heard the key turn in the lock on the outside.

He waited for some little time, until the sounds of the burglars' footsteps had died away in the distance along the alley, and then he stole to the door.

Just as he expected, he found it fastened.

The burglars had carried off the lantern, and Hal was left in total darkness.

He was glad, then, that he had noted the position of the windows while there was light in the place.

The lock on the door was a massive one, and without wasting time in trying to break it, Hal carried the barrel, behind which he had been hidden and placed it directly under one of the windows.

Then standing on the barrel, he reached the little portal and tore down the slip of carpet which was fastened over it.

Feeling in the darkness, he learned that the window was large enough for him to crawl through it, but that, as he had thought, it was guarded by iron bars.

He thought of the tools which the burglars had left behind them, but he understood the picks and iron drills would not serve him to sever the bars on the window.

Hal tried each one of the bars on the window. All but one of them was firmly set in the great stones of the wall, but the last bar he grasped rattled a little as he wrenched at it, telling him it was somewhat loose in its socket.

As the bar rattled under his hand, Hal heard a noise in the alley close to the window.

"There is someone there! The noise I made could be heard in the alley," he thought, breathless with excitement.

But instantly a voice reached him from without.

He felt like shouting for joy, for the voice, which was almost a whisper, was that of Tom Tatters.

It seemed the shrewd street urchin was on hand most opportunely—just when Hal needed his help to get out of the fix into which his enterprising spirit had led him.

"Is dat youse, Hal?" asked Tom Tatters, and the young reporter knew his street Arab friend was crouching close to the window, in which, it should be said, there was no glass.

"Yes," replied Hal. "Is that you, Tom?"

"Right you are, cully. I thought youse would make for here when yer left me in such a big hurry an' I wanted to see how yer made out; so I made a short cut and got here ahead of youse. See?"

"Good for you, Tom."

"Gee! but I was a-skeered about youse when dat push of dem four blokes went into de basement," Tom replied.

"I'm all right, but I'm locked in. Tom, you'll help me, I know. Go to the junk shop, right up the street in the next block, and get a couple of sharp steel files."

"Right you are, I'm off!" said Tom, darting away.

He soon came back with the files. With them he and Hal set to work, and in an hour's time two of the window bars were severed, and Hal crawled out into the alley.

CHAPTER V.

THE FORTUNE TELLER.

In the gray, uncertain light of a new day whose dawn was just at hand, Hal Howe and Tom Tatters made their way out of the alley.

The face of the boy reporter was pale, and he looked somewhat haggard, for he was not used to night work or such perilous experiences as those which had so recently befallen him.

"Tom," said Hal, as they turned into the adjacent street, "you have done me a good turn. I've got the stuff for a first page sensation for my paper, and I want you to take this."

As he spoke, he handed Tom a ten dollar bank note, which was a part of the money he had received for carrying out Jack Bannister's big "scoop."

"Gee! De newspaper biz must be a regular gold mine. Tank yer, Hal, an' if I kin give you a tip agin' any time, you bet yer life I'll do it, see?" said Tom, pocketing the money.

"Gee! never had half as much coin in me clothes afore in me life. Da 'ull tink I'se a millionaire down in Hogan's Alley if da find out I've got de tenner. But you bet dat push ain't goin' to git onto it, fer I don't want to have me stuff pinched. See?" he added.

Hal laughed, and they walked on, but they soon parted, for Tom declared he must hasten to get something to eat.

"I'se goin' to sherry me nibs up to Beefsteak John's an' cure dat empty feelin'," he said.

Hal knew his sister Mildred would be worried almost to distraction because of his unexpected absence all night.

So he hurried home, and a weight of apprehension was lifted from the heart and mind of the devoted sister when she saw him all safe and sound.

At breakfast Hal had to go over the whole story of his night's adventures.

Then he wrote out the exciting article and took it down to the office of the Earth.

Of course, the city editor was more than delighted to get hold of such sensational news ahead of any rival newspaper.

But, when he had complimented the lad upon his daring and

enterprise in a way which brought a flush of pleasure to his cheeks, the veteran journalist said:

"We must hold our article back until to-morrow morning, in order to give the police a chance to take the burglars. You will see the chief and post him fully in regard to the matter, under pledge of secrecy."

"I had thought of that, and I expected you would advise me, just as you have done," answered the boy.

Then, having seen the editor place his precious "copy" in the safe, Hal went out.

Hal lost no time in seeing the chief of police, and when he left the office of that officer he had told all he knew about the plan to loot the Hamilton bank.

The chief promised absolute secrecy, and assured Hal that he would capture the burglars that night.

Also he pledged his word that Hal, exclusively, should have the story of the capture.

The chief was as good as his word. The four crooks were arrested in the basement of the empty house that evening, and Hal added the story of the capture to the account of his discovery of the gang.

The article came out on the first page of the Earth the next morning, with great catchy headlines, and as Hal was given the credit for it all, he found that he had made his reputation in a day, as a newspaper reporter.

Besides all that, he received a check for a good round sum from the Hamilton bank, as a testimonial of the appreciation of his services in their behalf, which the officials felt.

"I begin to think my lucky star has really appeared at last," said Hal to Jennie, when he was with her that evening.

Early in the day he had seen her and warned her not to leave the house, and when she learned of Ralph Cadman's plan to have her spirited away by the burglar, she was naturally much alarmed.

She heard the news of the capture of the crook whom Cadman had bribed to place her in his power with joy and relief. But still she experienced a sense of insecurity, fearing further attempts against her well-being by Cadman.

Jennie had not as yet obtained a new situation, but she said she hoped something would come of a visit she meant to make to an employment agent the next day.

Hal determined to find some means to make his sweetheart accept assistance for her invalid mother and herself, without the knowledge that the money came from him.

There was a portrait of James Marlow, Jennie's father, who had so mysteriously disappeared under a cloud, on the wall in the little sitting room in which the young couple were that evening, and looking at it Hal thought, as he had often done before, that there was a wonderful family resemblance between father and daughter.

Of this he spoke casually, and Jennie replied, opening a locket which she wore suspended about her neck, and showing a small miniature of her father set in it.

"Yes. But you can see this little picture shows my likeness to my poor, lost father even more strikingly than the large portrait."

The mystery of James Marlow's fate deeply interested Hal, and the next day he saw several city officers who had been engaged on the case, and talked with them about it.

The officers all seemed to be of the opinion that Marlow had fled to some foreign country with the money which had been instructed to him.

One of them went so far as to say he hoped his foreign correspondents would yet locate the missing man abroad.

Hal decided for the present at least, he would keep his own counsels regarding the vague suspicions which he entertained, and which had been awakened in the office of the Wall Street broker.

The young reporter was kept pretty busy after that, as the city editor assigned him most of the important work which had been given to Jack Bannister.

But Hal took time to call on his unlucky reporter friend frequently, and the latter was thus kept in touch with the doings at the office of his paper.

Meanwhile, several days later, Jennie Marlow went to the office of a lady employment agent, whom she had already visited without result several times, since she left her situation in Wall Street.

The agent in question made a business of securing employment for the better class of bread-winners, such as stenographers, typewriters, clerks and saleswomen.

There was almost always a number of young women in the waiting room at the employment agency, and on the occasion of her last call Jennie found several girlish acquaintances there.

Not long after her arrival, while the girls were chatting in a lighthearted way despite the fact that they were all out of employment, one of them, who was seated at a window overlooking the street, broke in upon the conversation of her companions, saying:

"Here comes old Mary—the fortune teller. She often comes in here, and she'll tell anyone's fortune for a quarter, I don't exactly believe in her, but she really does hit some things perfectly true."

The girls laughed and made light of the old fortune teller's ability.

But in a few moments old Mary hobbled into the room.

She was a hag-like old creature, who looked like a gypsy, and she leaned heavily on a cane which shook in her withered trembling hands.

"Let me read your fortunes, ladies. Only a quarter, and I'll tell you if you'll be lucky in love, and everything young ladies want to know," whined the old woman.

After chaffing the old woman a little, one of the girls let her tell her fortune.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BOY REPORTER AMONG THE FLAMES.

Old Mary knew her business, and, of course, she painted the future of her young patroness in bright and alluring colors.

She told of the inevitable rich and handsome husband, a happy home with children at the fireside, a long life, and all that.

The girls interrupted her with chaffing remarks, and tendered mock congratulations to their fortunate acquaintance.

Jennie Marlow alone was silent.

She was thinking that want would soon enter her humble home if she did not obtain a situation, for her pride would not allow her to accept money from Hal unless in the last extremity to save her invalid mother from suffering.

Jennie occupied an obscure corner of the room, but when Old Mary had finished telling the first fortune, and no one else would allow her to unveil the future, she espied Jennie.

Perhaps it was because Jennie was a little better dressed than her companions that Old Mary thought she might "cross her palm with silver."

Anyhow, the fortune teller approached close to Jennie, saying:

"I'm sure there is good luck in store for you, my pretty dear. Let old Mary tell you what will befall you."

Jennie's face was partially turned from the old woman and she was in the shadows, so it was not until she changed her position that the hag saw her beautiful face plainly.

Then something surprising—inexplicable took place.

Old Mary started back, with an expression upon her wrinkled features as if she had seen a ghost.

She trembled with fear, as it seemed, and put up one claw-like hand, as if to hold Jennie off.

"His face! Fates and furies! Who are you? Who are you, girl? Who are you?" cried old Mary, in a shrill voice that vibrated with the unmistakable notes of terror.

She recoiled step by step, still staring at Jennie as if her fair young face held her in the thrall of a painful fascination, whose spell she could not break.

"My name is Jennie Marlow," said Jennie, quite astonished.

"Marlow! Marlow!" repeated the aged fortune teller, wildly, and then she added:

"I won't tell your fortune! No! No! I can't! I dare not!"

Wheeling with a quickness of which one would not have supposed her capable, old Mary rapidly hobbled out of the room, when she had uttered the last strange words.

Jennie grew pale. There was a silence in the room for a moment. Then the girls began to talk all at once.

"Can it be the future has something so awful in store for me that old Mary really dared not tell it me?" said Jennie, presently.

"I don't believe it," answered one of her companions, impulsively. "She acted as if she recognized in you a likeness to someone, and that frightened her."

"Oh, I think——" began Jennie, but she abruptly paused.

She had been about to say "I think probably she recognized in my face a wonderful likeness to my missing father."

Instead, she said, after an awkward pause, "I think she fancied I resembled someone she has known, and regarding whom she has unpleasant and alarming memories."

A few moments later Jennie was called into the private office and the manager informed her she had secured her a splendid situation at an advanced salary in a great publishing house.

Jennie rejoined the waiting girls, all bright and smiling, and when she told them of her good luck they all made light of old Mary's words—that she dared not tell her fortune.

The truth was, well knowing his sweetheart's delicacy and pride would not permit her to accept pecuniary assistance from him, Hal Howe had, through the readily-given influence of the Daily Earth, obtained for Jennie the excellent situation of which the employment agent, who was in the secret, had told her. But Jennie could not get the words and the recollection of the fortune teller out of her mind.

A voice seemed to whisper in her ear: "Old Mary knows something about your father. There was something like the terror of conscious guilt in her evil old face."

That very evening when, innocently enough, Jennie told Hal of her good fortune in getting a desirable situation and received his congratulations, she also related the episode of the employment office, in which old Mary had played such a surprising part.

Hal was astonished, and he exclaimed:

"The old fortune teller knows something about the fate of your father! I am sure of it. I'll make it my business to find her, and I'll try to induce her to speak. Old Mary may hold a clue to lead us to the knowledge of the truth."

The young reporter was as good as his word. He tried to find old Mary the very next day, and for many days thereafter, but all in vain.

Meanwhile, Roderick and the other burglars who had been captured in the empty house, because of the information which Hal had given the police, were brought to trial.

The young reporter was called as a witness, and so the criminals learned they owed their arrest to him.

They were all convicted and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, and when the judge had passed sentence upon Roderick, the enraged criminal leaped to his feet in the pris-

oner's dock and cried out fiercely, as he shook his huge fist at Hal, menacingly:

"If I live to get out of prison I swear I'll find you out, and I'll have your life!"

But the prisoners were hurried out of the court room, and Hal went away thinking the savage words of the criminal were but an empty threat.

There was a fire in a tenement block in Hogan's Alley some weeks later, during which time Hal had gained much experience as a reporter, and given excellent satisfaction to his employer.

Hal was in the neighborhood when the alarm was given, and he hastened to the scene of the conflagration, for reports of fires were always "good matter" for a newspaper.

The young reporter witnessed some thrilling rescues that were made by the daring firemen. At last, when the doomed tenement was almost wrapped in flames, the fire chief announced that all the inmates were safely out.

Just then a voice at Hal's side shouted:

"No, they ain't all out either! Old Mary, the fortune teller, is in her room on the top floor, I seen her go in, and she ain't come out!"

Hal saw the speaker was Tom Tatters.

Almost as the last words passed the lad's lips, an old woman appeared amid the smoke and flames at an upper window.

"Dere she is! Dat's old Mary!" cried Tom.

The firemen put up the sliding ladders, and several, in turn, tried to go up to the old woman, who stood at the window screaming in terror, but the flames drove them back.

"We can't save her!" cried the fire chief.

"She must be saved!" shouted Hal Howe, as he thought the old woman had the great secret of a lost man and a missing fortune in her keeping.

The next moment he leaped upon the ladder, and began to climb up the billows of red flames and the clouds of blinding smoke.

CHAPTER VII.

SAVED FROM THE FLAMES.

As Hal Howe began to climb up the ladder amid the smoke and flames, a cry of horror went up from the crowd below.

All thought the brave, heroic youth was doomed to a terrible death.

Hal had taken off his coat and thrown it over his head.

At the throat he had fastened it, so that his face was pretty well shielded, and yet his could breathe and see as well as the blinding smoke would permit him to.

While the roar of the flames and the voices of the multitude made a pandemonium of sounds, of which, however, he seemed heedless, Hal went on and on.

The heat was intense, and though the flames, which were fast approaching, did not as yet actually reach him, Hal knew that each moment increased his peril.

The excitement of the moment seemed to nerve him. He had but one thought, and that was to save old Mary, the fortune teller.

Considerations of personal safety were for the nonce overwhelmed by the powerful incentive of action.

He saw before him a heartbroken wife and mother, whose life had been darkened and made one long period of doubt and suspense because of the unknown fate of her beloved husband. The pale-faced woman seemed to urge him on. And he thought of Jennie, his beloved.

"Yes, yes! He must rescue the old creature who might be able to throw some light upon the dark mystery of years ago. Gratitude might move old Mary to speak. She might break the seal of silence, which had been placed upon her lips to serve him, to whom she owed her life.

And then, oh, happy thought—the cloud of shame, because of a father's supposed guilt might be dispelled from the horizon of the young life, that was all in all to him.

Upward and upward, spurred on by his excited and hopeful thoughts, the lad struggled. But soon he could see nothing.

The black smoke poured out in greater volume, and it seemed that he was plunging madly upward into the crater of a volcano—into darkness and death.

He was half suffocated.

Suddenly, for a moment, his brain reeled and his hold upon the heated rounds of the ladder relaxed.

It was an awful moment.

Hal thought he was falling, and with a desperate effort he fixed his grip upon the ladder with an iron hold.

Just then a gust of wind blew the great clouds of smoke aside.

As Hal drew a deep breath of fresh air into his parched and burning lungs, a great cheer went up from the crowd below.

It was a glad outcry! It was a tribute unconsciously wrung from human hearts to a hero.

And then Hal saw that he had almost reached his goal.

Just above him he saw the window, and the form of old Mary.

The woman hung across the sill.

At a glance Hal saw she had fainted.

Then came the struggle to reach her to lift her in his strong arms.

Fortunately, the thin, withered old form was but a light weight for the heroic, young reporter, whose muscles had been well tested to feats of strength by athletic exercises.

He lifted old Mary in his arms and there she hung, limp as if lifeless, and carrying her, he began to climb down the ladder.

Then the cheers burst out again; they sounded like a faint roar to Hal. The blood was beating wildly in his brain.

At times he experienced a sense of faintness because of the want of air, as the smoke closed over him.

And then, around the adjacent corner of the lofty old tenement house, the red flames swept in a billow of greater volume. The wind had changed suddenly.

But the firemen were playing the hose upon the building beside the ladder, and though sometimes the water struck the descending lad with a force that threatened to hurl him down, the water saved him. His clothing was saturated and the spray refreshed him.

At last he reached the eager, outstretched hands of the firemen with his helpless burden.

Old Mary was saved, but Hal fell like a dead and lifeless weight into the friendly arms, ready to receive him!

All at once his strength had deserted him.

But he was soon revived, and when he came to himself he found Tom Tatters and several of the firemen beside him.

The congratulations and praises which Hal heard upon all sides were very pleasant to him, but as soon as he had learned that old Mary had been carried away in an ambulance to a certain city hospital, where she was likely to remain for some days, he made his way out of the throng. Tom Tatters went with him.

Knowing there would be time enough to see and converse with old Mary later on, Hal hastened to the office of his newspaper.

Then he wrote up the account of the fire, and it went to the press in time for the first morning edition. Of course, Hal was too modest to dwell upon the episode of his heroic rescue of old Mary.

But he was not the only reporter at the alley fire, and they

told the story of Hal's daring rescue of the old woman, in their several papers.

How proud Hal's loving, faithful sister was of her brave young brother, when she read it all.

And how noble sweet Jennie Marlow thought he was, when she too read the newspaper reports which cast the bright halo of heroism around her boyish lover.

Hal saw Jennie the next day and he said:

"I am now going to see old Mary."

"You will try to get her to give you an explanation?" Jennie asked.

"Yes, I shall seek to learn from her the meaning of her singular conduct at the employment agency," he replied.

"Oh, I hope she will tell you, and that as we suspect, her words may tell that she knows something about my poor father's fate," Jennie said, in eager anxious tones.

"I hope gratitude will prompt her to tell the truth," answered Hal.

After that he did not delay long. Leaving Jennie full of glad hope for the result of his interview with the old fortune teller, he went to the hospital to which the aged woman had been taken.

A resident physician received Hal's card, and as the representative of a prominent newspaper, he was accorded all the consideration which he could desire.

Being ushered into the presence of the doctor, Hal said:

"I believe an old woman, known as old Mary, who was rescued from a burning tenement, was brought here last night."

"Yes, sir. She was brought here in an unconscious state, but she was soon revived, and it appeared that she had sustained no serious injury—mental shock, evidently the result of terrible fright, was the cause of her prostrations."

"I wish to see the old woman," Hal requested, well pleased at the report of the physician, because it assured him the aged fortune teller was in a condition to converse with him intelligently.

"The woman has been discharged," replied the doctor.

"Hal's face showed the consternation he experienced.

"Discharged!" he repeated, blankly.

"Yes. You see, a man who claimed to be her son came to the hospital this morning and stated that he wished to remove the old woman to his home. She was anxious to go. There was no reason why we should detain her, and so her son was permitted to take her away. He brought a cab, and they were driven off in it."

"Did you get the son's address?" asked Hal, breathlessly.

"No, I did not, I regret to say. I did not consider it of any importance to do so."

"Too bad! Too bad! But tell me what the man who took old Mary away looked like. I must trace him!" cried Hal.

CHAPTER VIII.

"THE BIRD HAS FLOWN."

The physician for a moment regarded Hal with a look of questioning surprise, but as the youth did not vouchsafe any explanation, he said:

"I observed old Mary's son rather closely, for he was a man of rather striking appearance."

Then he went on to give a word picture of the man who had removed the old fortune teller from the hospital.

Hal listened with growing astonishment as the doctor proceeded, and when he ceased speaking, the excited youth cried out as if he was conscious of the utterance:

"Ha! There must be an error! You have described Roderick, the burglar, to the life!"

"What! I do not understand! Do you mean you know the man I described?" exclaimed the doctor.

"It seems so! And yet on the face of it the thing seems impossible!"

"How so?"

"You described accurately a man whom I believe to be serving sentence in Sing Sing."

"Ah! then my impression that the fellow was a man of evil and desperate character may have been correct. Men have broken out of Sing Sing before to-day, you know."

Hal gave a tremendous start.

The words of the doctor contained the suggestion of a thrilling, alarming possibility.

"Doctor, you must excuse my abruptness, but I must be off. I must know the truth about this man of whom we have been speaking without delay!" cried Hal.

A moment later he was out of the room. Thence he hastily gained the street.

"Now, for police headquarters! If Roderick has broken out of Sing Sing, the news of his escape will first be sent to the chief," he declared.

Hal lost no time after that.

As swiftly as possible he made his way to the office of the chief of police.

He was ushered into the presence of that officer without delay, as soon as he had sent in his professional card.

"You are looking for police news, eh?" said the chief, when he had greeted the young reporter, who had already made himself a favorite at headquarters.

"Yes, sir, I have had startling information. Is there any important news?"

"Yes, we have the news of a prison escape."

"Heavens! Then what I feared is true."

"What? Have you already heard that Roderick, the burglar, broke out of Sing Sing?" demanded the chief, and he showed surprise, for he fancied the news was as yet only in the possession of the police.

"I was not sure. I suspected such a thing."

"Tell me all," urged the chief.

"He did so. He related how old Mary had been taken to the hospital, and how the doctor had given him an accurate description of Roderick when he described the man who removed the old woman, and claimed to be her son."

"Bravo! Here is the clew we want! Now we can hope to trace Roderick. Keep the matter to yourself, lad, and you shall have the first news of it if my men succeed in locating Roderick, or the old woman. I'll set them on the trail directly. They will take up the scent at the hospital. If Roderick is not found, and the old woman, too, I'll be much surprised," said the chief.

Then he hastily dismissed Hal, and the lad left the building directly.

"This is an unexpected turn of affairs. And it's not exactly a pleasant thing to know that a man whose evil heart is filled with hatred and thoughts of revenge against you is at large. Ha! the desperate criminal was in deadly earnest when, at his trial, he voiced the threat that he would have my life if he ever escaped from prison," said Hal, when he was telling his sister Mildred all that evening.

"Oh, Hal, how alarmed I am for your safety. You must always be on the lookout for that evil man. Oh, I do hope the police will soon find him and send him back to prison," she said.

Hal had brought Jennie to spend the evening with his sister, and thoughts of danger for her beloved caused the young girl's cheeks to turn white.

"You will try to guard yourself from that terrible man! You will take every possible precaution against him for my sake!" she urged.

And Hal pretended to make light of the danger, hoping thus

to quiet the fears of the two loved ones whose anxiety he had so fully aroused in his behalf.

"It strikes me," he said, smiling, "that Roderick will have enough to do to keep out of the clutches of the police without bringing himself to notice by trying to injure me. He'll think only of hiding in some obscure retreat—at least while the police are hot on his trail."

"The whole police and detective force will be on the lookout for the fellow, and it's likely he will not be at large long. The officers generally get their man when they really set about it," he added.

Mildred looked thoughtful as she replied:

"Have you thought, Hal, that Roderick naturally would not have taken the great risk of going to the hospital if he had not some powerful motive?"

"Yes, I thought of that, as soon as I suspected the identity of the man who had removed old Mary from the institution," Hal rejoined.

"Oh!" exclaimed Jennie. "It looks as if Roderick was afraid old Mary might tell you something."

"Yes. The fellow could have learned from the morning papers that the old woman owed her rescue to me."

"Hal, I am almost sure that the motive which actuated Roderick in hastily removing the old woman beyond your reach, has to do with what we suspect old Mary may know about the secret of my father's disappearance with the money of the bank," affirmed Jennie, with an air of almost positive conviction.

"Yes, yes. It may easily be so. If Roderick is mixed up in the affair, I am very sorry. He will seek to keep the truth from us," replied Hal.

The conversation was continued until the time came when Hal set out to escort Jennie home. And when he had seen her safely to her mother's house, he went to report to the office of his newspaper.

On the way Hal met a couple of reporters who belonged to the staff of a rival newspaper.

Our young reporter's phenomenal success as a novice in journalistic work had not only awakened the jealousy of reporters on other newspapers than his own, but there were men engaged on his own paper who would have liked to give him a setback merely because he had surpassed them.

Among them was a journalist of a rival paper, who made Hal a flattering offer to join the staff of his sheet, but the young reporter felt that he was in duty bound to stick to those who had given him his first chance and declined.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MASKED BALL.

The next day Hal Howe received an assignment to attend a masked ball—the great French ball that was to be given at Madison Square Garden.

And he was instructed to write up the popular function in an entertaining way for the morning issue of his paper.

Hal knew that a known reporter misses many good things at such a function, which a merry masker, or one who assumed such a character, would find to write about.

So he went to the French ball en masque and in costume.

Hal mingled with the great throng of merry maskers, and he kept his eyes and ears open for material for his report.

Occasionally he retired below stairs, and made a few entries in his notebook.

At length when Hal was among the maskers on the main floor of the spacious building, where the brilliant throng was like a living kaleidoscope of movement and beauty, an incident came under his observation which immediately attracted and fixed his attention.

He saw a handsomely costumed lady of beautiful figure,

whose face was masked, of course, and who wore a profusion of diamonds, was being covertly followed by a man in the costume of a cowed monk, and who wore a mask of black silk, through the openings of which a pair of glittering, snaky eyes were constantly riveted upon the lady of the diamonds.

Hal's suspicions were aroused.

"If that fellow isn't after the lady's jewels, I miss my guess," he decided.

It seemed to him that the lady and her escort—a tall gentleman in the rich court costume of a nobleman of the time of Louis XII.—were entirely oblivious of the suspicious movements of the monk.

The distinguished looking couple chatted and laughed as they moved about, and the eager and malevolent eyes of the monk seemed to have no power to draw their attention to their owner.

Hal got behind the monk.

He knew there were detectives around, but as none of them were looking after the monk, Hal resolved to watch him and spoil any game of robbery which the fellow might attempt.

The young reporter did not stop to think that it might be a dangerous thing to interfere alone with a diamond thief, who was desperate enough to attempt a bold robbery in such a place.

At length, he saw the couple whom the monk continued to follow, go toward a private box.

The entrance was a short passage, draped and curtained.

At the opening the escort of the lady with the diamonds left her for a moment, saying:

"I will join you in the box in a moment, my dear."

He turned away. The lady went into the box.

In a moment Hal saw the monk glide into the curtained entrance which led to the box.

As he disappeared Hal said to himself:

"Now it's time to act."

He looked about for an officer or a detective whom he knew, but he saw none at hand. So he passed behind the curtain after the monk.

The next moment a dark form hurled itself upon him. A heavy hand clutched his throat, and while the snaky eyes glared at him through the opening in the mask worn by their owner, the knowledge suddenly dawned upon Hal that night—that the man in the costume of a monk was really Roderick, the burglar.

CHAPTER X.

RALPH CADMAN AGAIN.

The young reporter was completely surprised by the sudden attack of the man whose eyes had at last brought the knowledge of his identity to his mind.

Too late Hal understood that the cunning fellow must have noted that he was watched and followed, and that he had feigned ignorance of the fact most admirably.

The lad had little experience in dealing with such characters as Roderick, and it was by no means surprising that the latter duped and outwitted him.

Evidently the criminal meant to execute his vengeance upon Hal then and there, though he was taking the most desperate chances, for the escort of the lady with the diamonds might reappear at any moment, or someone else might come that way.

The firm hold which Roderick had fastened upon Hal's throat prevented the latter from making any outcry, and indeed his breath was shut off.

The curtains completely concealed the scene of the assault from the people beyond the box entrance.

Vainly Hal struggled.

It seemed his efforts to free himself from the terrible stran-

gling grasp of his enemy only caused the heavy hand of the latter to tighten its hold.

Not a sound came from Roderick's lips, but his eyes—his terrible eyes—glared at his victim with an expression of hatred that was more eloquent than threatening words.

Hal hoped the lady who had entered the box would hear the sounds of his movements, as he struggled, but evidently the crash of music, and the tumult of noises from the throng beyond the curtains, drowned the sound of his shuffling feet, as he tugged and twisted in Roderick's grasp.

It was an awful thing to realize that assistance was so near at hand, and yet that he was powerless to attract anyone to his aid. His strength failed.

He ceased to struggle, and he believed Roderick would not release his hold upon him until he was dead, but as his brain grew dizzy and everything began to turn black before his protruding eyes, and the awful sense of suffocation came upon him, with its tortures and horrors, he was conscious of the sounds of approaching footsteps.

He felt his assailant start, and he knew the ruffian, too, had caught the sound which gave warning that someone was approaching.

As if in a dream, he heard the voice of Roderick as the fellow muttered:

"Someone comes, but I'll use my knife."

A shudder went through Hal's nerves, and then his heart seemed to stand still as he heard Roderick add:

"Ha! my knife is gone, and my pistol, too! Fool that I am, I left both weapons behind me when I donned my costume."

Hal's heart leaped again, and the succeeding moment he fell to the floor, too weak to stand alone, as the escaped convict released his hold upon his throat. Instantly the fellow darted out of the box entrance, dodging by the man who had been the escort of the lady with the diamonds, as the latter entered.

The new arrival stumbled over the prostrate form of the boy reporter.

"Hello! What's this!" cried the gentleman. Then he laughed, as he added, while he dragged Hal to his feet: "A case of too much wine, I suppose. Come, sir, stand up, you had better go out and take the air, or the police will pick you up."

Hal found voice to say faintly:

"You are mistaken, sir. I am not intoxicated, only faint. But let me warn you to look out for a mask in the garb of a monk, for I believe he means to rob the lady who is in your care."

While the gentleman made a surprised and half incredulous reply, Hal staggered out of the box entrance and mingled with the crowd.

The other did not follow him, but on the contrary, he at once darted into the box, to assure himself of the safety of his fair companion.

Hal felt his weakness pass, and the determination to lose no time in seeking to secure the arrest of his enemy caused him to look about eagerly for the villain and for an officer.

He saw nothing of Roderick. And it was some little time before he saw an officer, but at last he caught a glimpse of one at some distance. Hastily Hal made his way to the policeman, and having made himself known he gave the officer the information that the escaped convict was, or had been within a few moments in the garden.

The policeman conveyed this information to the other officers and detectives in the garden as quickly as possible.

Search was made for Roderick, and the several entrances to the great building were guarded by men on the lookout for the Sing Sing fugitive, but evidently he had left the garden before Hal gave the alarm, for he was not taken.

The police were astonished at the daring of the criminal, and they all admitted that he was no common malefactor.

Hal left the garden at last, and proceeded toward the office of his paper, where he arrived in time to write out his report of the ball, and the episode of his encounter with the escaped convict made a thrilling part of the story, which entertained the readers of the Daily Earth next morning.

The young reporter met Tom Tatters on the street the next day.

The sight of Tom Tatters made him think the cunning street gamin, who could go anywhere among the dangerous places of the city almost unnoticed, might prove of assistance to him in finding old Mary, the fortune teller, and also Roderick.

"Tom, I want to find old Mary. Have you seen anything of her since the night of the fire in the alley when I saved her?"

"No. De old woman ain't showed up in Hogan's Alley since dat night," said Tom.

"Well, I want you to find her, and I'll give you ten dollars the moment you can tell me where she is," replied Hal.

"Dat's a bargain. I'll pipe out fer old Mary wid both eyes, an' it won't be my fault if I don't find her somewhere in de east side neighborhood, where she used to live. Old Mary used to hit the pipe, an' she may show up in some Chinaman's joint, in Mott street yet, fer I'll bet she can't keep away from de dope fer long," said Tom.

He and the young reporter soon parted, but not before the latter had given the shrewd lad an accurate description of Roderick, and asked him to look out for the fellow while he was trying to find old Mary.

Hal went to call on Jennie that evening. As he approached her dwelling, he suddenly paused, and stared with a look of astonishment at a man who was ringing the bell at the door of his sweetheart.

The man, as Hal saw at a glance, was none other than Ralph Cadman, the broker's son.

"What can this mean? Surely nothing but an evil motive can have prompted Ralph Cadman to come to Jennie's home," Hal thought.

Almost at once he saw Jennie's mother open the door. Then Cadman, Jr., entered.

Hal went forward to the door, and he found Mrs. Marlow had neglected to secure it. He heard the voice of Ralph Cadman, and opening the door he stepped softly into the hall.

Then, through an inner door, the words spoken by the broker's son came to him plainly, and he heard Ralph earnestly assuring Mrs. Marlow that he was an honorable suitor for her daughter's hand, and he asked the widow to allow him to call upon Jennie.

Cadman spoke with apparent sincerity, and he went on to say that Jennie had misunderstood him, and that he hoped to set himself right with her, and ultimately win her regard.

But Mrs. Marlow replied with dignity, and told Ralph that he could not become a suitor for her daughter's hand, and that Jennie's heart was given to another.

At that Ralph's temper got the best of him, and he declared he knew Hal Howe was the one who stood between him and Jennie.

"But the young upstart shall not win your daughter from me, that I swear, and you and Jennie shall yet both regret your treatment of me," he said in conclusion.

Hal glided into the room on the side of the hall opposite the apartment in which Mrs. Marlow and the broker's son were conversing, as he heard the latter coming out.

Ralph passed hastily to the street without seeing Hal, and the latter joined Mrs. Marlow. Jennie was absent, for she had already entered upon her duties in her new situation at the great publishing house. Hal waited for Jennie to return.

CHAPTER XI.

JENNIE HAS A SECRET.

Mrs. Marlow and Hal conversed about Ralph Cadman, and they agreed in the opinion that some secret incentive, of a mercenary nature, prompted the broker's son.

Jennie soon came home, and both Hal and the young girl's mother saw at once that she was excited and troubled.

Hal suspected that she had met Ralph Cadman on her way home, and when he had commented upon her evidently unusually excited state, he told her of Ralph's call, and asked if she had encountered him on the street.

"No, no," said Jennie. "I did not see him. If I do not seem to be quite myself you can attribute it to fatigue; you know I have not become accustomed to the duties of my new situation as yet."

But Hal observed that Jennie did not look at him as she spoke. Then, too, there was something in her voice and manner that troubled him.

The truth was, Hal fancied that for the first time Jennie was deceiving both her mother and himself—that she was keeping something back.

Anon the young couple were left alone, as Mrs. Marlow's domestic duties called her away from them, for though she was an invalid, she would insist upon taking some of the household cares upon herself.

"Jennie," said Hal, frankly, when the door had closed behind her mother, "do not fear to trust me. I am sure something out of the common has occurred to disturb you. Tell me truly what it is."

He took her hand and drew her toward him. She did not recoil, but she replied with a firm voice:

"No, no! I cannot tell you or my dear mother the truth. I dare not do so. Do not press me, dear Hal. I know—I feel that I am acting for the best; but whatever my conduct may be in the future, I beg and entreat you always to believe I am true to you."

"Oh, Jennie, I fear you are undertaking something which will bring you into danger and cause you trouble," cried Hal.

"Duty, the strongest incentive, urges me to the course which an event of this day has decided me upon. Do not question me—dare not tell you the truth," she answered, becoming more agitated. Hal regarded her, searchingly.

He saw her beautiful face was lighted up with an expression of heroic purpose. Her eyes shone, and two red spots glowed feverishly in her fair cheeks.

"I have a great work to do. It can only be done by myself alone, secretly. Oh, Hal, I hope I have the strength which I shall need for my task," she went on.

He was about to speak, meaning to entreat her to confide all to him. But she read his purpose and forestalled it, saying:

"It will be useless to urge me to explain. Do not pain me by asking me again."

"Very well, I will say no more," he answered, in a hurt tone. She looked into his face, and it seemed her soul was in her great, dark eyes.

"Tell me, Hal," she asked, intensely. "Can you not trust me?"

"Yes!" he cried, convinced. "I can! I do!"

"Then for my sake, let us drop the subject," she said.

"Agreed. But I shall not think of it the less," he replied.

They talked long, as young lovers will, but when Hal finally left her, Jennie had not revealed anything of the secret which seemed suddenly to have come to her knowledge.

Hal was completely mystified. But he suspected some machinations, of which Ralph Cadman and his father were the authors, were at the bottom of Jennie's conduct.

And he resolved to watch over and protect his sweetheart.

"I will not permit Jennie to sacrifice herself to any mistaken sense of duty," he said.

And then he asked himself for whom Jennie could be induced to act a secret part—to refuse to give her confidence even to him. Like a flash came the answer to his mind.

"Her father!"

The idea thrilled him, and he was alarmed. He knew how devoted Jennie was to the memory of her lost father. He knew she would not hesitate to go to the greatest lengths in his behalf.

Hal felt that he had hit upon the clew to the mystery. As he proceeded homeward, he walked on the street upon which the residence of Jerome Cadman, the broker, was situated.

Hal was in sight of the rather imposing dwelling of Cadman when he saw a bent female figure emerge from a side street, at a short distance before him.

And immediately a boy in tattered garments glided into sight. Hal recognized the ragged urchin at a glance.

He was Tom Tatters, and it was evident that he was stealthily following the decrepit old woman.

The boy reporter had not seen the face of the latter, but as soon as he saw Tom Tatters in pursuit of her he decided that she was old Mary, the fortune teller.

"Bravo! Tom has done well. Now, to see the outcome of his pursuit of the old woman," decided Hal.

He proceeded to follow Tom. The street lad had not seen Hal. While Tom continued after the aged fortune teller, Hal in turn fell in behind the shrewd street urchin.

Old Mary went on as swiftly as her trembling limbs would carry her, and she did not once glance in the rear.

At length she paused, and Hal experienced some excitement, as he noted that she had halted directly before the residence of Jerome Cadman.

Old Mary shaded her eyes with one scrawny and claw-like hand, as she looked up at the broker's handsome residence.

Then, as if she had made sure of the number, she ascended the stone steps and rang the bell.

Tom Tatters stepped behind a great tree at the curb and watched her, while Hal stood stock still, saying to himself:

"The chain of circumstances is growing. Old Mary seeks the man whom I suspect knows something about the missing man."

Very soon the door of the broker's residence was opened by a liveried servant. He seemed to order the old woman away.

Then her cracked voice rang out in shrill and angry tones as she cried:

"I will see him! Tell Jerome Cadman old Mary is here. Just tell him that, and he'll let me in. Ha, ha, ha! Jerome Cadman won't close his door on old Mary, I tell you!"

Just then the servant, who had denied old Mary admission to the house, was thrust aside by Jerome Cadman himself.

And Hal saw that he recognized the fortune teller, as he led her into the house, but the young reporter also noted that Cadman looked enraged as well as surprised and alarmed.

When the door had closed behind the man of wealth and the poor old creature who had demanded an audience with him, Hal joined Tom Tatters.

"I spotted her in an opium joint, just as I thought dat I might—old Mary, I mean. Maybe you seed her go in dat house. I follered her all de way here from de joint," said Tom, as he saw Hal.

"You have done well, Tom. When she comes out she must not see me, but you must follow her again and find out where she now dwells. Then report to me," answered Hal.

He slipped a banknote into Tom's willing palm, and then he walked on around the next corner.

CHAPTER XII.

A SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT.

The boy reporter had scarcely turned the corner when he saw approaching a man who was employed as a messenger at the office of his paper. The messenger caught sight of Hal at once, and he hastened toward him.

"I've been looking for you. You are wanted at the office directly. The city editor told me to say to you it was something important, and that you must report to him at once," said the messenger, as he came up.

"All right, I'll go straight to the office," replied Hal, and he set off, accompanied by the messenger.

He soon reached the office of the city editor of his paper, and as soon as he came in the veteran journalist said:

"I have a special assignment for you, my lad, and if possible, I want you to make a 'beat' with your report of the affair."

"I'll do my best."

"That's the way to talk. Spare no pains or expense to get the full report to us ahead of the other reporters."

"What's the nature of the affair?"

"It's a sensational crime."

"Ha! Tell me where to go and I'll be off upon the instant."

"We've just had a wire that a murder has been committed at an obscure hamlet, off the telegraph lines in New Jersey. The nearest town, of any importance, is on the railway, and from that point our dispatch came. Here is the telegram. It will tell you where to go."

Hal read the telegram, which was very brief, and merely told of the crime, but did not give any of the particulars.

"I suppose the other papers will send reporters post-haste to the scene of the crime, as our dispatch is an associated press message, and our rivals probably received a copy of it," said the editor.

"No doubt," Hal assented.

Then he bade the editor good-day, and hastened out of the office.

"Now, then, if I hope to get ahead of the other reporters I must look sharp and none of them must see me on the train, on my way to the station nearest the scene of the crime," reflected Hal.

He got home as quickly as possible.

There he made a change of garments, putting on an old suit, and a wide straw hat, which he had picked up in the country when he was off for a day's outing some time before.

Hal pulled the hat down over his eyes, and knotted an old colored handkerchief around his neck.

When he boarded the smoking car of a train in Jersey City a little later, he saw a couple of rival reporters getting into the rear coach. They looked at Hal. But he thought they did not recognize him. He turned his head, and hurried by them.

The train started almost as soon as Hal got seated in the smoker, and by the time he had glanced around and made sure there was no one in his line in the car, the train was well under way.

It made but few stops until the station nearest the hamlet which Hal wished to alight at was reached.

Before the train had well stopped, Hal was on the platform, and seeing a "carryall" waiting near by, he ran to it, and in a moment or two he was being driven away.

He had made a bargain with the driver to take him out to the hamlet, about ten miles in the country, at which the crime he had come to report had been committed.

Looking back, Hal saw the two reporters who had ridden in the rear coach of the train running after his vehicle, and he heard them shouting to the driver to stop.

The fact was, the vehicle which Hal had secured was the only one in waiting at the depot when the train came in.

Hal's driver was about to pull up.

"Don't stop! I'll double your fare if you get me to the scene of the murder ahead of those fellows!"

"All right! By gosh, I guess Sime Perkins' team kin beat any horses them chaps kin hire in town with the start we've got," said the countryman, as he whipped up his team.

The horses struck into a pretty fast gait, and evidently, with his curiosity aroused, the driver began to question Hal as to why he wanted to get to the hamlet so quickly.

The lad thought he might as well trust the countryman, as he wanted to engage him to wait for him at the hamlet until he had obtained the particulars relating to the crime, and then drive him back to the railway station and the telegraph office.

So he said:

"I'm a newspaper reporter, and I want to get the first news of the particulars of the crime to my paper."

"Gosh! I understand now. I'll help you all I kin, mister, if you'll just have my name printed in the paper. Say Sime Perkins drove you with his spanken team o' bays."

"I'll do it. And I want you to rush me back to town as soon as I've got the points about the murder."

"It's a go."

"Now, tell me what you know about the crime."

The driver was only too willing to tell Hal all he knew and more, too. The man really knew the facts, as far as they had as yet come to light, and by the time they arrived at the hamlet, Hal had his story jotted down in his notebook.

While he wrote and listened to the loquacious driver, who seemed to delight to hear the sound of his own voice, Hal glanced behind him occasionally.

But he saw nothing of the two newspaper reporters on the road. In fact, he saw no vehicle at all, and so he congratulated himself that he had distanced his rivals.

When the hamlet was reached, Hal found a throng of the country people around the house in which the tragedy had occurred.

The dwelling was guarded by a constable and his posse, but the officer allowed Hal to enter when he had made his business known to him.

And the young reporter was given all the information he asked for. He found that Perkins' story agreed with what he was told by the constable.

But, as the particulars regarding the crime have no connection with this narrative of the struggles of a young newspaper man in his efforts to make his way, we need not dwell upon the matter.

Suffice it to say, that Hal was satisfied in a very short time that he had learned all that he could about the tragedy then.

He was writing hastily in a rear room of the house of the tragedy when he heard voices that startled him. Looking out of a window, he saw one of the reporters whom he had beaten in getting to the hamlet.

Hal jumped up and ran out.

Then he learned that the rival reporter had arrived on horseback while he was writing, and that the man had already secured the story of the crime.

Hal looked for the team which he had engaged.

Just then the reporter who had come on horseback rushed out of the house, ran to his horse, and mounting, dashed away, toward the railway town.

Hal saw nothing of Perkins or his team.

Much excited, and thinking he was to be beaten after all by the rival reporter, Hal made inquiries for Perkins, and someone said he had driven to a tavern half a mile away.

Hal was in despair.

But just then he saw a young fellow ride up on a bicycle.

A happy thought occurred to the lad, for he was an expert wheelman, and he had won more than one race as an amateur.

Two minutes later he had hired the young wheelman's bicycle, and was riding away on it at full speed in pursuit of the mounted reporter.

"Take the right hand road at the bridge and you'll save half a mile on the way to town," shouted the bicycle owner.

CHAPTER XIII.

HAL GETS AHEAD OF THE MOUNTED REPORTER.

The mounted reporter was in sight when Hal Howe started after him on the bicycle, but he was too far away to hear the valuable bit of information which the owner of the wheel shouted as Hal set off, the latter believed.

He was sure his rival had found out that he was at the scene of the tragedy.

And in a moment, as he saw the mounted man wave his hand at him in a derisive signal of good-by, and heard his taunting voice as he shouted something which he did not quite catch, he knew he was recognized.

Hal had a passing acquaintance with his now elated rival of the press.

The man's name was Jones, and he was known as a hustler.

He had the reputation of being the best man on the staff of the paper which he represented, and it was said that no nice scruples of honor, or strict professional honesty was allowed to interfere with him when he was out for a beat.

Hal felt that he had a shrewd, smart man to deal with, and he did not wonder that Jones was confident that he could beat him to the telegraph office in the railroad town, since the horse which he rode was a fast one and he had obtained a good start.

But our hero was on his mettle, and he did not mean to give up the race as long as there remained the faintest chance of winning it.

He knew the time made by bicycle racers, and he was aware that in a long race an expert of the wheel could distance a fast horse.

Hal had the hope that, despite the fact against him, that his mounted rival had obtained a considerable start, if he was ignorant of the knowledge of the short cut from the bridge, and did not avail himself of it, he might get ahead of him.

Never before had the determined and ambitious youth made such good time on the wheel as he now attained.

He worked the pedals with lightning speed, and the discovery which he instantly made that the bicycle was a high gear model racer, gave him additional encouragement.

On, on he sped on his wonderful noiseless vehicle, and as the road was pretty smooth and hard, he had little fear of puncturing the tires of his mechanical steed.

And yet he knew such an accident might happen; of course he sought to avoid every rough place in the way.

The fences and hedge rows seemed to fairly fly by him in that wild headlong race.

Once or twice he struck a stone and upon its well inflated tires the wheel bounded high, but Hal kept his seat.

Presently the mounted reporter gained the summit of a rather steep hill ahead of Hal.

Then once again he made a derisive gesture, and half turning in his saddle, shouted:

"It's no use, Howe! You're beaten this time! It takes a good one to score against Jones!"

He had gained a little on the speaker, and as the favorable wind carried his voice toward the wheelman, he caught Jones' exultant words.

"Don't be too sure of that! The race isn't ended yet!" he shouted back.

And just then the mounted reporter sent his horse flying down the opposite side of the hill, and he was lost to the sight of his pursuer.

At no great distance beyond the hill, Hal had noticed a bridge which he had crossed on his way to the hamlet, in the vehicle of the untrustworthy Mr. Perkins.

Reaching the top of the hill—up which he propelled his wheel with some loss of speed, Hal saw his rival dashing across the bridge.

Beyond it, Jones disappeared around an abrupt curve in the highway, where a long stretch of timber land began.

"Bravo!" Hal cried to himself. "He doesn't know about the short cut! He has passed the road which branches off the main highway, just this side of the bridge!"

Down the hill Hal coasted like a flash.

He reached the place where a narrow road branched off at a distance but a few yards from the bridge, and once more setting his feet upon the pedals he turned into this road.

Then on he sped as before.

But he found the narrow road was much rougher than the well traveled one which he had left, and so as he kept up his speed, the danger of an accident was materially increased.

Fortune favored Hal, however, and he raced on and on, without meeting with the slightest mishap.

Suddenly, a trampish-looking man emerged from the woods at the roadside ahead of Hal. The fellow brandished a heavy club and he placed himself in the middle of the narrow way, so that Hal could not pass him without being in danger of receiving a blow from his club.

The hostile attitude of the fellow made Hal think instantly of the reports which had reached his paper, that several wheelmen had recently been held up and robbed by tramps on lonely roads in that part of New Jersey.

And, as if to completely confirm Hal's suspicions that the fellow before him was a dangerous customer, he called out gruffly as he swung his club in the air:

"Say, young feller, you jist pull up an' shell out! I'll crack yer head if yer try to git by me!"

Hal smiled grimly.

"No miserable hobo like you shall stop me!" he gritted under his breath.

But at the moment he very much regretted that, as was the fact, he had no weapon with him.

Instantly pulling up as the dangerous tramp ordered, Hal dashed straight at the fellow. His wheel seemed to leap over the ground.

The tramp thought he was going to be run down. Naturally he stepped aside, and swung his club, meaning to knock Hal off the wheel before he could pass.

But the expert of the noiseless steed made his mount suddenly swerve aside, and at the same time he ducked his head.

The club descended upon the empty air and Hal was several yards beyond the tramp highwayman before the latter fairly realized that the daring young wheelman had cleverly eluded him.

Hal soon dashed out into the main highway again at the point where the byway, which he had so swiftly followed, rejoined the main road.

He looked anxiously in each direction.

The road was deserted.

Neither the mounted reporter nor anyone else was in sight.

The youth was excited and anxious.

Panting, while he wiped away the perspiration which streamed from his flushed face, he decreased his speed somewhat.

At that moment, of all things, he was most anxious to learn if Jones had already passed the point of junction of the byway with the main road.

"If he has already gone by here, I have lost the race after all," Hal reflected.

He hoped this was not so, and he listened intently, striving to hear any sound of hoofs.

Suddenly he started.

To his hearing, at that instant, there came a faint sound which thrilled him.

It was the sound of flying hoofs.

And the noise came from the direction of the hamlet. Hal could not see far along the road in that direction on account of a hill, but his heart leaped exultantly, for he was sure the horseman who was approaching was Jones, and that he had gotten ahead of him at last.

CHAPTER XIV.

KRUGS ALLEY AT NIGHT.

Away dashed our young newspaper hero, as if the welcome knowledge of the sounds of the approaching horse had endowed him with new strength.

And, indeed, the pretty certain prospect of victory did serve to stimulate the weary lad to new efforts.

"Now, I must and will reach the telegraph office ahead of Jones. If I can do that I'll be all right to wire my account of the tragedy to my paper first, for it is the rule with the telegraph companies that the man who first gets 'on the wire' as the reporters say, can keep it until he has finished sending 'matter'," thought Hal.

The road from where Hal came out upon it from the byway was very crooked, and so the lad hoped he might be able to keep out of Jones' sight.

And while his noiseless steed made no sound to inform Jones of his whereabouts, he knew the hoofs of his rival's horse would continue to warn him, so that he could tell if he gained upon him.

Hal proceeded steadily.

Occasionally he heard the horse in his rear, and when such sounds reached him he increased his speed, and so he went on and on until at last, while yet Jones had not come in sight, he rode into the railway village.

Hal sped down the one long main street of the straggling country town like the wind. Now, that the goal for which he had so manfully striven was almost reached, he felt like a racer on the home stretch, with the winning post in sight.

Riding up to the depot, Hal leaped from his wheel and rushed toward the telegraph office, which was at the end of the building opposite the side of it which he had reached.

At the door Hal paused and looked back.

He commanded a view of the main street of the town.

Just as he looked up it he saw Jones come in sight. He was riding furiously and Hal couldn't help feeling some sympathy for the enterprising fellow who had made such a struggle to beat him to the telegraph office.

A moment later the telegraph key was ticking merrily under the expert hand of the operator, and Hal stood at his side dictating his report of the hamlet tragedy from his notebook.

Presently Jones darted into the office.

In his hand was his copy, ready for the wire.

Hal faced Jones, smiling.

"Good-day, Mr. Jones. I trust you had a pleasant ride, but as I am on the wire just now, you may as well take things easy."

"Great Scott! is it really you? By George! I thought I'd left you behind! How in thunder did you do it, anyhow?" panted the astonished and disgusted Jones, as he dropped into a chair.

"I'll tell you all about it later—when I've got my copy over the wire."

"Well, I acknowledge I'm beat, and there's no hard feeling on my side. Everything is fair in love and newspaper work," said Jones, good naturedly.

"I say the same," answered Hal, and then he and Jones shook hands.

Hal kept the wire until he had sent a full account of the tragedy to his paper. Then he surrendered the telegraph, but not until he had held it to telegraphing a lot of stuff of no importance, merely so as to keep the wire until it would be too late for Jones to use it in time for his paper to get his report on the press for the evening issue.

The reporter whom Hal had seen with Jones on the train came in later on, and he said he had hired a farmer to drive him over to the hamlet, but on the way the vehicle had broken down and he had to walk several miles.

He was very crestfallen. But as he and Jones represented different papers, when he heard that Hal had beaten his friend he seemed somewhat consoled, probably according to the fact that "misery likes company."

The next train carried Hal and the other two reporters back to the city.

And our young newspaper hero had the satisfaction of knowing that, thanks to his efforts, his paper had the honor of publishing the first full authentic account of the great sensational tragedy of New Jersey.

Of course Hal came in for a fair share of well deserved commendation from his superior, and he received many congratulations from his fellow reporters. Some of these he thought were not sincere, for he was aware that his phenomenal success since he joined the staff of the Daily Earth had aroused the jealousy of older men employed as reporters on the same paper.

Hal received the commendations and congratulations which he had earned very modestly, and he was not a bit puffed up or egotistical about it. He knew luck had favored him, and he did not give his pluck and enterprise undue credit.

But as he left the office he overheard a sour looking old reporter mutter to one of his cronies:

"He's got a bad case of the big head and I'd like to get the chance to take the conceit out of him. He's getting altogether too many good assignments over the heads of older and better men on our staff."

Hal was sorry that jealousy of his success had made enemies for him.

But he had experience enough in the ways of the world to know that success is seldom won in any career without incurring the envious hatred of those who fail.

Hal went to look for Tom Tatters as soon as he had reported at the office of his paper.

Now that he had accomplished the task which had been assigned to him he once more thought of old Mary, the fortune teller, and he meant to see her as soon as he could learn where to find her.

Tom Tatters usually plied his occupation of bootblack and newsboy on Park Row, near the newspaper offices in the afternoon.

Hal found Tom in front of the World building.

The lad was busy shining 'em up for one of his patrons, and Hal waited until his tattered friend had pocketed his nickel.

Then he went up to Tom and asked:

"Well, Tom, what about old Mary? Where did she go to when she left Cadman's house?"

"Down on Krugs alley off Oak street; I followed her an' I kin show you de crib dat she's stayin' in. Gee! I guess de ole woman got a stake in dat fine house what youse seed her go into fore youse left me, fer she jingled coin in her pocket as she went away from it."

"Ah, quite possible," said Hal, who began to have suspicions of a delicate nature regarding Cadman and old Mary.

"Now, Tom, when gets dark I'll join you here, and you

shall show me the house to which you followed old Mary after she left Cadman's residence," Hal added.

Tom agreed to that.

Then Hal withdrew.

He knew he was going to venture into a dangerous neighborhood, and so he procured a revolver, and with the weapon in his pocket he joined Tom Tatters about an hour later, when darkness had fallen upon the great city.

The young reporter had put on a wide slouched hat, and he drew it down over his eyes. Thus his face was kept in the shadow when he passed a light. He did not wish to be recognized, of course.

Tom Tatters led the way directly to Krugs alley.

It was a narrow, badly lighted byway, and Hal knew it had an evil reputation.

The inhabitants belonged, for the most part, to the dangerous class of the great city. It was said that it was not safe for a well dressed person to pass through Krugs alley at night alone.

"I believe you know old Mary in a friendly way, Tom, so I want you to go into the house in which you located her and talk to her, if she is there, while you keep your eyes open and find out if there's any particular danger for me if I go in."

"All right," said Tom, and when the house alluded to was reached, he left Hal and went to the door. Hal presently saw the portal open. Tom passed into the house.

In a little time Tom reappeared in the door.

"Come on! It's all right!" he called to Hal.

But then, out of the darkness at his side, a thrilling whisper came to the young reporter.

CHAPTER XV.

HAL IN OLD MARY'S HOUSE.

Hal was standing in the deepest shadows of the alley at a short distance from the door of the house in which Tom Tatters appeared.

The darkness must have concealed him from the sight of anyone who might be peering from the windows of the house.

And it was evident that he was invisible to Tom.

The voice which reached Hal, just as Tom Tatters called out the reassuring invitation for him to enter the house, startled the young reporter, not only because of the words of the speaker, but for the additional reason that it was a girlish voice, and that the low tone was, as he fancied, a familiar one. The voice said:

"Do not go into that house. There is danger, death, perhaps, for you, lurking there."

Hal did not respond to Tom Tatters' call.

On the contrary, he stood enthralled by surprise, and he peered eagerly, searchingly into the dense shadows behind him, seeking to discover the owner of the mysterious warning voice.

He saw no one. The impenetrable darkness served to baffle discovery, and with piqued wonderment he demanded:

"Who are you? Speak again. Let me know to who I owe this warning, if it is really sincere, if you are a friend?"

Hal's voice was low.

He waited for an answer, straining his sense of hearing, listening with great intentness; but no reply came to him.

Almost at once, however, he heard the swish and rustling of female garments, and the sound of light footsteps.

Then two shadows flitted across a space toward the entrance of the alley, where the light from a window made a brilliant pathway through the environing darkness.

"Two women!" said Hal under his breath, and then it came to him with the abruptness of a flash of light, that the low voice which had spoken to him out of the gloom was strangely the tones of Jennie Marlow.

He stood irresolute for a moment thinking.

"Pshaw! Impossible! It cannot be! Jennie would not be abroad in such a locality as this at night. No! I am self-deceived," he uttered.

And yet he could not imagine that any girl, any woman, could have sufficient interest in his welfare to give him a warning, unless that person was some loved one.

Then he thought of Jennie's strange conduct, and the refusal she had made to trust him with the knowledge of some secret which had evidently recently come to her.

The reflection caused him to start forward in the direction taken by the two imperfectly distinguished female forms.

And he began to think what he had at first deemed to be wholly impossible might after all be true.

It was possible the new purpose, which was the mainspring of Jennie's refusal to confide in him, might have led her to the alley that night. It might have been her voice which he had heard.

He shuddered as the fear took hold of him that Jennie might be the victim of some conspiracy.

He had taken but a few steps in the direction in which the two unknown female figures had vanished when a hand grasped his arm.

He was in such a state of excitement and anticipation of danger that the contact of the hand gave him a nervous shock, and he gave a tremendous start.

"What's de matter wid youse? Old Mary is alone. Why didn't you come into de house?" demanded the voice of Tom Tatters, and Hal knew that it was the hand of his street-boy comrade that had fallen upon his arm.

"I have changed my mind. I will not go into old Mary's house now. Though you saw no one with her, someone may have been concealed in her room. Roderick, the Sing Sing fugitive, may be there. Tom, I have had a strange warning. Come on! There is a mystery which I must solve!" said Hal.

"Gee! I wonder if youse gittin' a little off in yer head!" muttered Tom.

But he followed Hal, and the latter made his way swiftly along the alley toward the main street at the end of the dark and narrow byway.

Tom did not ask any questions, and Hal did not vouchsafe any further explanation then.

They reached the main street directly, and though it was well lighted and he could command an extended view along it in each direction, Hal failed to see anything of the two females who had flitted away in that course.

He acknowledged that he was baffled.

And he began to consider that he had been exceedingly venturesome not to say foolhardy in venturing to go to see old Mary in a dangerous retreat, without taking precautions to insure his safety.

Since Roderick had removed the old fortune teller from the hospital, he now decided that the conjecture that the Sing Sing fugitive might be concealed in the very house occupied by old Mary was not only a reasonable, but also a probable idea.

"My safety depends upon the recapture of Roderick. I'll get assistance, and if the fugitive is in old Mary's house an attempt to take him shall be made without delay," said Hal to Tom Tatters, as they passed at the entrance of the alley.

"All right. But I ain't seed nothin' of Roderick since I've been lookin' after de old woman," Tom rejoined.

And then, as Hal started along the street, and the street lad went with him, his curiosity got the best of him, and he asked:

"What do you mean by sayin' you had a strange warnin'—not to go into old Mary's house, as I take it, though you didn't jist say so?"

Hal explained.

Tom uttered a low whistle. It was a way he had of indicating surprise.

"Dis is too much for me! Gals' doin's ain't ter be accounted fer nohow. You can't make 'em out. They allers do just what you think they wouldn't. Now, y'ud say a gal, like Miss Marlow, wouldn't dare to go into Krugs alley even by day, let alone by night," said Tom.

"But there's a mighty pretty gal that does go there to see old Mary. I seed her go into the old woman's house this eve, an' I've seed the same gal go to the house in which the old woman lived afore it was burnt. I wonder if dat gal was one of the two what you seed. Shouldn't wonder a bit. Fust off, I used to think she came to old Mary to git her fortune told. Then I thought that wasn't so, fer she came so often. 'Course, she wouldn't want her fortune told a dozen times," he added.

Hal began to suspect, if through any strange circumstance, Jennie had really been in Krugs alley that night, it was not impossible that the girl, of whom Tom Tatters spoke, might have been her guide.

"Tom, I believe you know where Miss Marlow lives," he said, abruptly.

"Yes."

"Will you go to her home?"

"Course, if you say so."

"Good! Make haste. Learn if Jennie is at home. If she is absent, ask Mrs. Marlow, in my name, if she knows where her daughter is."

"I'll do it."

"Then come to the office of the Earth to report to me. If I am not there wait for me."

"Yes."

Tom darted away as he spoke, and Hal proceeded at a brisk pace until he presently availed himself of a street car, and in a short time he presented himself at police headquarters. He saw the chief, and a little later, with a dozen officers in plain clothes, he was on his way to Krugs alley. The officers had received orders to search old Mary's house for Roderick.

Later on, one by one, the officers, led by the boy reporter, glided into Krugs alley. The house in which the aged fortune teller had been located was a detached building. It was silently surrounded by the officers. Then, accompanied by Hal, three of them sought admission.

There was no response. The house was in darkness, and profound silence reigned within it. Hal and his companions immediately forced the door and entered. They went into the first room they came to, and the light of a policeman's lantern dispelled the gloom. Hal was at the side of the foremost officer, and a thrilling and startled exclamation burst from his lips as he glanced forward and made a terrible discovery.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BOY REPORTER MAKES A FIND.

Little wonder that Hal Howe was thrilled and startled by the sight which was disclosed to him by the light of the policeman's lantern in the apartment of the old fortune teller's house, to which he and his companions had first penetrated.

The room was small and poorly furnished, and in a corner, seated in a large arm chair, he saw old Mary. But her head had fallen forward upon her bosom, and one glance at her livid face, with its glazed and staring eyes wide open, gave Hal the impression that she was dead.

He went forward with the policeman who carried the lantern, and the other officers, who had entered the house, followed them.

In a moment the young reporter and the others had made sure that life was really extinct in the body of the aged woman.

"The question now to be determined is whether this is a case of natural death, or if a great crime has been committed," said the leader of the officers.

Hal stood silent and discouraged while a cursory examination of the body of the dead was made.

The lad was aroused from his disheartening reflections that now that old Mary could never reveal what he suspected she might know about the fate of the lost bank messenger—Jennie's father—his hope of penetrating that mystery was dashed to the ground.

One of the officers said:

"There are no indications of foul play to be discovered. It must remain for the coroner to positively decide the cause of death in this case."

"And now to search the house for Roderick," said Hal.

"Yes; every way of escape from it is guarded by my men, and if the fugitive is in the dwelling we shall take him," the sergeant in charge of the police said.

Thereupon the quest, in which Hal took part, was begun, and carried to a conclusion with care as well as caution, for the desperate character of Roderick caused the searchers to be upon their guard against exposing themselves needlessly. But when every nook and corner of the house had been inspected no trace of Roderick, or, indeed, of any other person, was found in the house.

The young reporter was chagrined and disappointed at this result, and of course, the police who had been very hopeful of securing the badly wanted man, shared the lad's discomfiture.

Having directed that two of his men should remain to guard the house until the coroner took charge of the remains of old Mary, the sergeant of the police withdrew with the rest of his men.

But Hal remained in the house with the two officers who had been left to guard it.

Though the search for Roderick had been futile, the lad wanted to make a quest through the belongings of the suddenly deceased woman.

And he entertained a hope that, though death had set its seal upon the lips that might have spoken words to enlighten him upon the subject of the fate of James Marlow, perhaps he might discover something that would prove to be mute evidence of value.

And so Hal began his new quest.

First he assured himself that there was nothing in the line of written documents upon the person of the dead, and then he searched every place where he fancied letters or papers, belonging to the old woman, might possibly be concealed.

For more than an hour Hal occupied himself with this quest, and then, as he had completely ransacked the house without result, he was forced to conclude that the fortune teller had left no clew behind her to the secret which she might have held.

"And so," reflected Hal, as he stood alone in the room with the inspection of which he had concluded his unavailing search, "it seems the old hope of ever getting at the truth of the affair which has blighted the lives of my loved one and her bereaved mother has been lost."

But as this unwelcome conclusion forced itself upon his mind, it was almost instantly supplanted by another idea.

"Oh! I am forgetting something of importance! All hope is not lost, as long as the package of letters which fell from Jerome Cadman's tin box, in the old broker's office, remain in existence," he exclaimed.

The thought was a welcome one to Hal, and it served to some extent, to console him for the failures of the night.

Of course, from the moment when he began to think that, despite the seeming improbability of the thing at a cursory view, the girl who had warned him in Krugs alley might be

Jennie. Hal had experienced the utmost solicitude on her account.

And he was consumed with anxiety to hear Tom Tatters' report, that the question of Jennie's absence from home that night might be settled.

So he determined to delay no longer in the house of the dead woman, but that he would go to the office of his newspaper to meet the street lad at once.

Hal strode across the carpeted floor of the room, and, all at once, something beneath the floor covering crackled and rustled.

He knew he had stepped upon some crisp papers, which were hidden underneath the carpet.

His hands trembled as he tore up the carpet, thinking at last that he had stumbled upon that for which he had thus far vainly searched.

In a moment he drew a package of letters from beneath the carpet.

With consuming eagerness and anxiety he examined them by the light of a lantern which the police had given him.

But the letters proved to be entirely unimportant.

They were merely commonplace ones addressed to Roderick by various pals of his, and they related to matters which were for the police already an old story.

As Hal opened the envelope of the last letter in the package, however, he brought to light a paper upon which there was a rough drawing of the interior plan of a building.

Upon this there was no writing to identify it, but it dawned upon Hal almost directly, that the drawing was a plan of Jerome Cadman's offices in the great building in Wall Street.

"Hello! This means something! A man like Roderick does not get such a plan as this for nothing," exclaimed the lad.

Then he threw aside the worthless letters, but he put the burglar's rude drawing carefully away in an inner pocket.

After that Hal hastily left the house, feeling that after all he had found something to repay him for searching old Mary's dwelling so carefully.

The young reporter went directly to the office of his paper. But he did not find Tom Tatters there.

Going to his desk in the reporters' room, Hal wrote out an interesting report of the quest for Roderick in Krugs alley and the discovery of old Mary, the fortune teller, dead in her chair.

The night editor was glad to get the article, and he sent it to the composing room at once.

When he had finished writing, as Tom Tatters had not yet come, Hal became so anxious that he resolved to go to Jennie's home himself.

He was leaving the newspaper building when he saw his street boy friend coming.

Tom made haste when he saw Hal, and as soon as he came up he hastened to say:

"I went straight to Miss Marlow's house. De old lady opened up fer me. I asked her fer Jennie, just as you said, an' she looked askered, but she said Jennie had gone to her room. 'Are you sure of dat?' says I. 'Yes,' says she. But she goes to de foot of the stairs and calls to Jennie. There was no answer. Den de old lady began to shake an' up de stairs she goes. Next I heerd her let out a scream an' up I goes. She met me in de hall, lookin' white as chalk, an' ready to faint. 'Jennie is gone. She ain't in de house!' says she."

"Oh, Tom, I fear my dear one has been lured away into danger. It may be that even now she is in the power of a man whom she dreads and fears," said Hal.

"I guess we kin take it dat Jennie was really in Krugs alley to-night" replied Tom.

"What is to be done? I cannot rest inactive while I know

that Jennie is abroad this night unprotected, while I fear she is in danger. Oh, where shall I look for her?" exclaimed Hal.

He spoke more to himself than to his boyish companion, but Tom thought he was asking his advice.

"Gee! I dunno what to say. It would be just like lookin' in a haystack for a needle ter look for the gal in dis big city, widout knowin' a thing about where she went. But say, maybe she'll come home all right. Dat's what I told her mother, an' I said, too, that you would find the gal, if she didn't come home of her own accord. Dat seemed to cheer the old lady up a little," said the street lad.

"I will go to Jennie's home myself. I must console her poor mother. If necessary, I'll appeal to the police, and have a general alarm sent out for my dear one," cried Hal, and then, bidding Tom good-night, he hurried away. Later Hal arrived at the dwelling of Mrs. Marlow, and in answer to his ring the good lady in person opened the door.

"Jennie——" Hal began.

"She is at home. She came in just a little while ago!" cried the mother, in joyful tones.

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed the youth, fervently, and the next moment, white-faced and agitated, his girlish sweetheart stood before him in the hall.

CHAPTER XVII.

JENNIE TELLS SOMETHING.

"Oh, Jennie, what an alarm you have given me! Where have you been to-night?" cried Hal.

The young girl hesitated, but she seemed at a loss how to reply; but with a sudden compression of the lips and a quick brightening of the eyes, she presently answered:

"Dear Hal, I cannot explain now. Remember what I have already told you—that however strange my conduct might appear, you could trust me."

"But it's not safe for you to be abroad unprotected at night in this great city. Danger threatens you, I am sure," said he.

Mrs. Marlow looked distressed, and her weary eyes sought the fair face of her daughter yearningly as she said:

"She will not even trust her poor mother. She will not tell me where she went to-night, and for the first time she has deceived me, leading me to suppose she had retired for the night, while she slipped out of the house."

Impulsively, the young girl put her arms about her mother's neck and kissed her.

"You break my heart! You compel me to say more than I should. I have never told you a deliberate falsehood. Then believe me, mother dear, when I say I have a mission—a secret task—to do. I am pledged to silence. But if I succeed, happiness may yet come to our bereaved home."

Mrs. Marlow started, as she gently put her daughter away from her, and looked into her face, beaming with the light of what seemed a noble purpose.

"I do believe you, my dear, good girl. And your words can have but one meaning. You are seeking to learn the truth about our lost loved one—about your dear, misjudged father," she said.

Jennie again sought the shelter of her mother's arms, and cried upon her bosom, while a caressing hand stroked her fair hair, and the mother's heart beat in sympathy with that of the devoted daughter.

Hal felt that he was answered, that, as he had suspected, improbable as it seemed to his practical way of thinking, Jennie really believed she was engaged in a search for the truth about her father's fate.

With the mother and daughter he went into the little sitting room, and anon, he and the brave and faithful daughter were left alone, for Mrs. Marlow saw that Hal wished to converse with Jennie privately.

"I will never again urge you to take me into your secret, but I wish you would answer one question," said Hal, earnestly, as he placed himself at Jennie's side.

"What would you ask? If I can answer the question without breaking my pledge, I will do so," she responded.

"Were you in Krugs alley to-night? Did you warn me there? Did you whisper to me out of the darkness near where I lurked?"

"Yes. I was there. I told you not to enter old Mary's house, for at that time I knew Roderick, the criminal, was there."

"How could you know it? Ah, I remember you were not alone. But I forgot, I said I wished to ask you but one question, and now many inquiries are thronging to my mind."

"But you must question me no further. However, I will tell you something, which I have not been pledged not to reveal."

"Yes, yes. Go on!" cried Hal, all eagerness.

"Once there was a poor, unfortunate girl—a deserted wife, who was friendless in this great city. In despair she wandered the streets one stormy night, hopeless, feeling utterly alone in the midst of the multitude. It seemed to the heart-broken girl that there was nothing in life for her, that she had nothing left to live for. Upon a great bridge she paused, and looked down. Far below the water glided softly on in its gloom and mystery, and the low ripple of its tide seemed to call her to seek oblivion and rest in its quiet depths. Then she would have thrown herself from the bridge, but eager hands grasped and held her back. A girl who was crossing the bridge seized her. That girl proved a friend to the distracted and hopeless one. She cared for her. She comforted her, and helped her to face the battle of life again. The rescued one was grateful, and the time came when she sought to repay the girl who held her back from the leap to death upon the bridge that night, when a darkness that was not of the night had fallen upon her broken heart."

Jennie paused, and Hal exclaimed:

"And were you the good angel of that night? The girl you saved was your companion in Krugs alley this night. I know, I feel that is the truth."

Jennie's silence gave confirmation to this conclusion, and Hal went on speaking feelingly.

"Thank Providence the one who is seeking to help you is a true friend. I am relieved, much relieved; for you know I feared you were being duped, and led into danger by some emissary of Ralph Cadman. I believe, too, we have not seen the last of that man, but that he will continue his pursuit of you, and that he will yet seek to injure me. For myself I do not fear him, if he will fight fair. But for you—ah, innocently enough, the girl who is seeking to aid you may lead you into the power of that man."

"I trust not," Jennie replied, but not without a trace of apprehension in her tone.

"You remember the incident of our discovery of the letters which fell from the box in Jerome Cadman's office? If our suspicions are true, and the broker and his son know something about your father, in your pursuit of that secret you may easily encounter the Cadmans, I should say," said Hal.

"But even the fear of that cannot hold me back. I will do what I believe it is my duty to do. But let us not talk more of this. I must not be led to forget the promise I have made of secrecy, and I have already almost broken my pledge. But I felt that I must say something to reassure you. I could not bear to see you so troubled on my account."

"Very well. We will change the subject since you wish it. But first let me say that if the time comes when I can help you, do not fail to let me know. Willingly I will work for you, even in the dark, since I know your purpose," he answered.

It was about an hour after that when Hal left the home of his girlish sweetheart.

The following day the young reporter presented himself at the office of his newspaper as the usual hour.

He was called directly to the presence of the city editor, who said:

"I have a pleasant assignment for you. You know the marriage of Millionaire Vanlester's only daughter and heiress to young De Peyster, the great railway magnate's son, takes place this afternoon at the Vanlester mansion."

He nodded, for he had read the published announcement of the wedding.

"Well, I have secured cards for you, and I want you to report the wedding in a way to please our fashionable patrons, you understand?"

"Oh, certainly! I'll be on hand, and I'll do my best, but I may have to get our fashion editor and society man to help me out when it comes to the description of the ladies' toilets," said Hal, smiling.

"All right. Only so you have the stuff in on time," the city editor replied.

Hal was very swell and handsome in his full dress suit, when he presented himself at the door of the Vanlester mansion that afternoon.

Of course he was at once admitted to the spacious drawing rooms, profusely adorned with floral decorations.

The guests had nearly all arrived when Hal came in, and soon his watch told him the time set for the ceremony had come.

But the time went by and the bridal party did not appear. When half an hour had elapsed, it began to be whispered about among the guests that something had gone wrong with the wedding.

Everybody seemed agog with well-bred curiosity, and whispered comments and conjectures buzzed about through the fashionable throng.

At last when curiosity had reached its highest pitch, and the surprised guests were awaiting some explanation of the delay, old Mr. Vanlester appeared, pale and agitated, and in husky tones made the announcement that the wedding was postponed because of the sudden illness of the prospective bridegroom. But it seemed to Hal that the guests fancied the truth was being kept back.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BRIDEGROOM IS MISSING.

The boy reporter left the Vanlester mansion with the other guests, and the fragments of conversation which he caught confirmed his idea that it was the general belief that the truth in regard to the cause of the postponement of the wedding had not been stated.

He heard a young man say to a companion that he had left young Mr. De Peyster in the best of health at noon.

And the speaker added remarks which told that the absent bridegroom was desperately in love with the lady to whom he was to have been united that day.

The remarks of other persons showed that the absentee was held in the highest esteem by all as a man of honor.

As Hal walked behind the young men, whose remarks he had first overheard, he obtained a bit of information which set him thinking.

"You know Ralph Cadman, the rich broker's son, was De Peyster's rival for Miss Vanlester's hand, and they say he was terribly cut up over it when she threw him over for De Peyster. Ralph is a bad man to have for an enemy, and if he has not had something to do with De Peyster's absence from the wedding, I miss my guess!"

"By jove! I shouldn't at all wonder if you were quite right!

I know Ralph Cadman well enough to think he would not stop at anything in such a case as this," the other said.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. De Peyster is a gentleman from the top of his head to the soles of his feet, and besides, he's my friend. I'm going to his house. I'm going to find out the truth, and I'll stand by him. He shall not be placed before the public in a bad light if I can help it," came the answer.

"Good for you, Dick! You're the right sort. Come along. Here's my carriage. Jump in. We'll go to De Peyster's together," proposed the other.

"All right, my boy!"

Hal saw the two young men enter a waiting cab, and as they were driven away, he saw two acquaintances of his approaching in a carriage. Hal signaled them.

In a moment the carriage was drawn up at the curb, and the reported exchanged a few words with the occupants of the vehicle, with the result that he entered it, and then the carriage was driven after the one in which the two young friends of De Peyster had departed.

Hal alighted near the De Peyster residence, and the carriage was driven on. The reporter saw De Peyster's friends alight from the other cab, and enter the mansion of the railway magnate.

He waited until they came out. A glance at the faces of the two young men assured Hal that they had heard astonishing news. The pair looked very alarmed, too.

The instincts of a reporter now impelled Hal restlessly. He scented the material for an article of interest for his newspaper. He wanted to get the true story of the missing bridegroom, for he knew if he could secure it, his paper would be eagerly read by thousands.

Hal sauntered carelessly by them as the two young men, whom he believed knew the truth about the matter, were getting into their cab.

They were talking excitedly, and they did not seem to notice the young reporter. Hal heard one say:

"De Peyster is missing. We've found out he left his home alone on foot quite suddenly, about one o'clock, just after he received a note, which came by the hand of a messenger. No one at his home knows what has become of him, and all are much alarmed."

"I think it is a case for the police," said the other, as he closed the door of the cab into which he had stepped after his friend.

The vehicle was driven away.

Hal's face beamed. He saw that if he could find the missing bridegroom, and get his story, another great success in his profession would be recorded to his credit.

He stood still and reflected.

"By George! I'll go in for a little detective work in this case, and if I succeed, it won't be the first time a newspaper reporter has beaten the regular officers in this city, at their own line of work."

Hal quickly formed a theory to work on.

Instead of setting in on a haphazard search for young Mr. De Peyster, he went to look for Ralph Cadman at the office of his father.

It did not take this inspired seeker after news very long to get to Wall Street.

He found Tom Tatters at the corner of Broadway and Wall street, and he sent the lad up to Cadman's office to find out if Ralph was there. Tom was in the habit of calling at the offices in the building to offer his services as a bootblack. In that capacity he went into Jerome Cadman's room.

He came back to Hal presently.

"Well, is he in?" demanded the latter, as soon as Tom reappeared on the street.

"Yes; Ralph Cadman is in de office," answered Tom.

"Good! I don't need you any more, Tom," said Hal.

Then he went into a deep doorway and waited while he watched for Ralph Cadman.

He had not long to wait. Very soon the broker's son came upon the street. He walked to Broadway. There he took a car uptown. There was a crowd on the rear platform, and in it Hal rode unobserved by Cadman.

When the broker's son left the car at a certain street, Hal alighted, and thence he tracked his man as cleverly as a real detective could have done, and he was sure Ralph did not notice him.

The fellow took a course which tended to confirm the suspicions which the boy reporter had formed. As he saw Ralph going into the slums of the East Side, the employee of the great city newspaper said, mentally:

"There has been foul play in De Peyster's case, I'll warrant now."

Hal had to dodge pretty lively sometimes in order to make sure that Ralph did not see him. But as the streets were pretty well thronged the difficulty of keeping out of the sight of the man whom he was following was not an insurmountable one.

At last Ralph went into a gloomily looking old house on a street which had long had an evil reputation, as the abode of dangerous members of the criminal class of the city.

Hal lurked near by until Ralph came out. He saw the fellow hasten away, and observed that his face wore an exultant look.

The reporter had turned up the tails of his dress coat so it looked like a jacket, and indeed he had quite the look of a waiter from some first-class cafe, who had come off duty without changing his garments.

There was a passage at the side of the building from which Ralph had come. Hal went into it. On that side of the house there were no windows, save two in the second story, and the reporter saw those two portals were crossed with iron bars. He observed, too, that several panes of glass were missing from one of the windows, and while he was looking up at it, a piece of plaster fell at his feet, as he saw a hand thrust through the window. He picked up the fallen object, and found a bit of paper twisted around it, on which the following words were penciled:

"The writer of this is held a prisoner here. He is Paul De Peyster. He recognizes you as a reporter to whom he was introduced at the Press Club, and asks you to help him escape."

Hal looked up as soon as he had read this, and nodded his head in assent. The hand appeared at the window again, and waved a signal to indicate its owner understood, and then Hal saw the face of a handsome young man at the portal. Hal recognized young De Peyster.

The reporter concluded, of course, that the inmates of the house were desperate characters who had been bribed by Ralph Cadman, and that they would resist any attempt to rescue their prisoner.

He could call for police assistance readily, but, if possible, he wanted to rescue De Peyster unaided by the officers, and so make sure that he alone obtained the first news from the missing bridegroom. While he reflected for a moment, a human figure glided into the passage, and Hal knew he was discovered.

CHAPTER XIX.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

The boy reporter stared violently as he saw the person who had so suddenly entered the passage beside the house in which he had found the missing bridegroom—young De Peyster.

He saw the newcomer was a young woman, neatly dressed in black, and he observed she had a dark and striking face.

The young woman stared at Hal fixedly, as she came to a standstill when she caught sight of him.

The youth flashed a quick glance up at the broken window, and he was pleased to see that De Peyster had retreated from it.

Though it was only a woman who had discovered him, Hal was by no means reassured on that account. The mere presence of the girl in such a locality told against her, in Hal's mind.

And he knew some of the criminal bands of the city counted women among their number, who were in some instances more dangerous than their male companions.

At the first glance the boy reporter, who had some skill in reading character, was not inclined to think the face of the girl in black was one to inspire confidence. But as he caught the full glance, which she cast upon him from her great, dark, sorrowful eyes, his first impression underwent an immediate change, and it seemed to him that an honest purpose was revealed in those splendid, melancholy orbs.

He read in them that the girl before him had experienced sorrow, and suffering—that her hard experiences had chastened, and purified her heart—making her a better woman.

For a full moment she stood there speechless, and it was evident to the object of her searching scrutiny that she was seeking to make sure of his identity.

This perplexed him, for while it seemed to indicate the girl had a knowledge of his personal appearance, he was, of course, entirely unable to recall her face, or to remember that he had ever met her before.

He possessed an excellent memory, and he did not suppose that, even in the busy whirl of his life in the great city, since he became a reporter, he could have forgotten the impressive face of the young woman, if he had ever previously encountered her.

The silence was embarrassing for Hal. Then, too, it was weighted with a certain element of suspense. He was all anxiety to know if the girl was to act the part of a friend or of a foe.

He was about to speak when the girl glided toward him, and when she gained his side, she said, in a half whisper:

"Hal Howe, follow me instantly, if you value your safety. There are keen-eyed men in the house, and if they should see you here, the sight would bring danger upon you, and upon the one you seek."

Surprised, but not inclined to trust the girl who so readily uttered his name, and whose manner, coupled with her intense and earnest tones, now gave him some reassurance, Hal said:

"Lead on, I'll follow."

"That is well. Have no fear of me," she rejoined, as she glided along the passage toward the rear of the house. The adventure was beginning to take on new romantic elements, and Hal was young enough to feel a sentiment of interest in the strange girl, who had become his self-appointed guide.

He followed her without hesitation, and she led him through a door in a high, light fence in the rear of the passage. Beyond the portal they came into a yard. There Hal saw an addition with a sloping roof that had been built against the rear wall of the house.

Just above the sloping roof of the addition, which was really constructed in the form of a lean-to, was a window, which, unlike the windows at the side of the dwelling, was not protected by bars.

The girl pointed up at that window, as she hastily said:

"I cannot stay here a moment. I have only time to say

that I am the true and grateful friend of one you love, and that for her sake I seek to help you now. Through yonder window you may reach the one you seek to save. Through it he may escape if you are not seen by the inmates of the house. Act as you think best, but remember you run a great risk if you attempt the rescue of the prisoner alone."

Before Hal could ask the name of his unknown helper, she glided through the gate in the fence. The portal instantly closed behind her, and the young reporter was alone, face to face with the dangerous undertaking which he was inspired to set in upon.

To reach the sloping roof of the addition it seemed to him an easy task, for heavy vines grew over one end of the structure and trailed across the roof.

Hal looked up at the window. There was no one there. Then he crouched down among the vines where he could not be seen from the house, and he waited until he thought the girl had traversed the passage. If he was discovered he did not wish those who saw him to, in any way, connect him with the girl who had sought to help him.

He was chivalrous enough not to wish to bring the strange girl into trouble on his account. Her words at first perplexed him, and as he remained quiet he repeated them, and then it came to him that the unknown utterances might be taken as proof that she was the girl whom Jennie had saved from the river.

"Yes, this is probably the truth—the explanation of her friendly conduct. I'll not forget her face. If I meet her again, I shall try to get her to let me share the secret relating to the lost man, which I believe she has confided to Jennie," he reflected.

But soon our brave and enthusiastic young newsgatherer began to climb up the heavy vines, and not without some difficulty, having once narrowly escaped a fall as a vine broke under his weight, he finally reached the roof.

Still no one appeared at the window.

Noiselessly Hal stepped across the roof and reached the window. Cautiously he looked through it. Beyond he saw a hall, and no one was visible in the passage, from which a flight of stairs descended, and from the sides of which several doors opened to different rooms.

Thus far fortune had favored the adventurous youth, and he congratulated himself accordingly.

Without delay, however, he tried the window, and he was delighted to find it was not fastened. He was about to raise the sash, when he paused abruptly, and glided out of sight from the window, at the side of it.

Hal was alarmed.

At that moment, when it seemed the way into the house was clear for him, he heard the sounds of heavy footsteps on the stairs.

As he crouched close to the wall beside the window, while the beating of his heart sounded loudly to his excited senses, the person whom he had heard on the stairs reached the hall.

Hearing him going along the hall, Hal ventured to change his position noiselessly, and he peered into the hall.

Then he saw the man he had heard, and his heart gave an excited leap as he recognized him, for the fellow was Roderick—the escaped convict.

Roderick paused at a door at the side of the hall, while Hal watched him.

Opening a small panel in the door, Roderick spoke through it. Hal heard his words. The fellow said, in gruff and threatening tones:

"If you want anything to eat or drink you can have it, as long as you keep quiet, but if you make any trouble the orders are to starve you into submission."

Then Hal heard the voice of young De Peyster, as he replied:

"I do not care for anything now. But tell the man who entrapped me here that, if he is holding me for a ransom, the sooner he states his terms for my release, the sooner he can get the money."

"I'll bear what you say in mind, and I'll tell the boss," was the answer.

"When will you see him?"

"Not until after dark. Then he'll be here. Meantime, me an' the others will be away. But don't think it will do any good to show yourself at the window. All the folks hereabouts—anyone that may come into the passage outside—will take you for Lem Brake's crazy son who was kept in the room until a few days ago," said Roderick.

Then Hal dodged away from the window as he saw Roderick was about to withdraw from the door.

Again the young reporter feared the fellow might look out of the window and see him, but he descended the stairs without doing so, and when he was gone Hal drew a deep breath of relief.

Raising the window noiselessly he listened until he heard men going out of the house, below stairs.

Then he crept through the window and proceeded along the hall until he reached the door of the room in which De Peyster was imprisoned.

CHAPTER XX.

HAL RESCUES AN IMPRISONED MAN.

Hal found the door of the room occupied by the unwilling tenant was secured by two large iron bolts.

These he hastily drew, and throwing open the portals, he came face to face with De Peyster.

"Come," said Hal, as he shook hands with the imprisoned man. "We are alone in the house, and now is the time to get out of it."

"Yes, yes. Let us hasten."

They quickly descended the stairs and made their way out of the house.

Thence they proceeded in haste and without interruption until they were clear of the disreputable neighborhood.

"How can I ever repay you for what you have done for me?" said De Peyster, anon, and evidently with much feeling.

"Oh, as to that," replied Hal, smiling, "you know I am a reporter, and if you'll let me have the whole story of how you were entrapped for my newspaper, I assure you I'll consider that all the obligation is on my side."

"I'll tell you everything. Come into yonder cafe," answered De Peyster, pointing.

"All right," assented Hal, and in a moment or so they were seated in a private dining room in the cafe.

While De Peyster spoke, Hal was busy with his notebook and pencil. He took down De Peyster's story in shorthand.

He accused Cadman and Roderick.

"Now, I must go to see my fiancée without delay, and then I shall take measures to secure the punishment of Ralph Cadman and his confederates," added the son of the railway magnate.

"Leave Cadman and the others to me—and the police," said Hal.

Then he and De Peyster again shook hands, and at the door of the cafe they parted.

While the prospective bridegroom called a cab, and was driven away in it, Hal proceeded to police headquarters.

There he had a long interview with the chief of police. At headquarters Hal wrote out De Peyster's story at length in a manner to make interesting reading.

The young reporter remained at the police station until after dark. Then he set out to once more try to capture Roderick, and also to arrest Ralph Cadman.

Four officers in civilian clothes accompanied Hal to the house in which he had found De Peyster. Upon their arrival at the dwelling the party soon made sure there was no one in it. They entered, and in the darkness which soon fell, they waited the coming of the expected men.

Some little time elapsed after the night had fallen before anyone came to the house in which Hal had set the police ambush.

But at last footsteps were heard at the street door. Then a key rattled in the lock, and directly the door opened, and Ralph Cadman came in.

"He is one of the men we want," whispered Hal to the policemen who were with him in a room at the side of the hall.

The next moment, when the street door had closed behind Ralph, the officers rushed out into the hall and pounced upon the broker's son.

Before he fairly comprehended what was taking place, Ralph was handcuffed and powerless in the hands of the police.

For a long time, indeed, until almost morning, the reporter and all the police vainly waited for the coming of Roderick and his pals.

Finally, however, the officers withdrew with Ralph, whom they took to the nearest police station.

Hal did not go home until he had called at the office of his newspaper and handed in his full report of the exciting story of the missing bridegroom and his adventures in seeking to rescue him, as well as the account of the arrest of Ralph Cadman.

The newspaper containing Hal's report of the story of the missing bridegroom sold like hot cakes the next day.

The young reporter met Tom Tatters in the morning on the street near the office of the Daily Earth.

"Gee! I've been doing a regular land office business wid the Earth. Say, dat story about de feller what didn't show up to get married is a great go!" cried the street boy, jubilantly as he jingled the coin in his pocket.

"I'm glad to hear that. But now, Tom, I want you to do something for me," said Hal.

"What is it?"

"You know you told me about a girl who visited old Mary very often?"

"Dat's so."

"Well, I want you to look for that girl."

"I'll do it."

"How will you start to look for her?"

"Well, old Mary is dead, ain't she?"

"Of course, and I've just learned the coroner has decided she died a natural death—heart failure."

"Well, as de gal you want me to find was sich a friend like to old Mary, why won't she show up to look after de body?"

"That's likely. I did not think of that."

"Where is the body of old Mary?"

"At Smith's undertaking rooms, on S street."

"All right. I'll go there right now, if I do lose de sale of a hundred more papers."

A little later Hal called at the office of the great publishing house in which he had obtained the new situation for Jennie.

There he saw his girlish sweetheart privately, and he related how Ralph Cadman had been arrested on the serious charge of causing young De Peyster to be drugged and kidnapped.

They talked as young lovers will upon such occasions, and then Hal related how he had met the strange girl, whom he

suspected was the girl whom Jennie had so nobly befriended, in her time of greatest need.

As he described the unknown, he watched the mobile and expressive face of his sweetheart.

"Ah! your face tells me the truth! The girl I met was the one you befriended!" he exclaimed.

"Yes. It must be so," acknowledged Jennie.

"Can you, are you, free to tell me her name?"

"She told me she was called Cora Doon."

"Thank you, Jennie. Though I am as curious and anxious as possible about the secret which that girl has told you, I will not question you in regard to it."

When Hal left her he felt that Jennie must have the best of reasons for her belief that the result she was so desirous of attaining was to be realized.

He had no idea of seeking to wrest the secret of Jennie's father from the girl called Cora Doon.

On the contrary, it was his solicitude for the safety of Jennie prompted him to send Tom Tatters to seek for Cora Doon.

That evening Hal learned that Ralph Cadman had been held for trial.

The deferred wedding of the railway magnate's son and the daughter of the millionaire took place three days later, and Hal attended.

After Hal sent Tom Tatters to look for Cora Doon, on the day after he rescued young De Peyster from the clutches of his enemies, the reporter saw Tom at the office of the Daily Earth.

"I seed the gal you sent me to look for. She came to de undertaker's shop, an' I heard her agree to pay for de burial of old Mary. Den she went away."

"Where did she go?"

"Home, I guess. Anyhow, I tracked her to a house into which she went just as if she lived there."

Tom went on and gave Hal the location of the house to which he had tracked Cora Doon.

The young reporter thought he would spend the evening with Jennie, and so, when he had told his sister Mildred where he was going, he set out for the home of his girlish fiancée.

As he neared her home he saw Jennie and Cora Doon coming toward him. He hid, and they passed him, then he followed. They went uptown by the elevated railroad, getting off at a station near the end of the route. He followed them to a gloomy building surrounded by a high wall, and saw them talk to another woman who came out of a gate. After a while they left and went home. The next morning Hal found out, by enquiry, that it was a lunatic asylum.

Hal went downtown, reflecting deeply.

A little later he arrived at the office of his newspaper. Exciting news awaited him there.

As he entered the presence of the city editor, that gentleman said:

"There's been a big robbery in Wall Street. The office of Jerome Cadman has been burglarized!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BROKER'S TIN BOX IS STOLEN.

"Ha! The job has been done sooner than I expected," replied the boy reporter, inadvertently.

"What do you mean?" asked the editor, looking at him in evident astonishment.

Then Hal went on, and briefly related how he had found the rule diagram of the interior of Cadman's office, in the house where it seemed Roderick, the burglar, had hidden it.

As soon as Hal had made his explanation, the editor bade

him to go to Wall Street, to get all the particulars regarding the robbery.

The boy reporter lost no time in reaching the scene of the burglary.

As he was recognized by the police, Hal had no difficulty in obtaining admission to the building.

He reached the door leading to the apartments which comprised the quarters of Jerome Cadman. The door was closed, and Hal paused as he heard Jerome Cadman's voice.

Then, as he caught the tones of another speaker in the office, Hal knew the broker was talking with a police detective, who was well known to the youth.

He immediately heard Cadman say:

"Though a considerable sum of money was stolen from my safe, the recovery of a certain tin box, containing valuable papers, which was a part of the burglar's booty, is of more importance to me than all else. I shall offer a large reward for the recovery of that box."

"Ah! so the robber carried off the box containing the package marked 'Letters relating to James Marlow', I'm sure," said Hal, mentally.

Then he knocked upon the office door.

Jerome Cadman opened it. When he saw Hal, he looked frightened and angry.

"What do you want here?" he demanded in surly tones.

"I call in the capacity of a newspaper reporter, sir, and I should be glad to obtain all the facts relating to the robbery here," said Hal, quietly.

When Hal heard the broker's story, he took occasion to speak with the police detective aside, and having received the assurance of that officer that Cadman had told the truth, as he believed, the reporter hastened to the office of his newspaper and turned in his report.

It was now Hal's purpose to devote himself wholly to the task of finding Roderick.

He obtained leave of absence from duty for twenty-four hours.

It occurred to him that since the burglar was well known to old Mary, and Cora Doon was seemingly a friend of the deceased fortune teller, it might easily be that Roderick was acquainted with the girl who had undertaken to assist Jennie to find her missing father.

That evening, roughly dressed, and with his soft hat drawn well down over his face, Hal went to the neighborhood of the house to which Tom Tatters had tracked Cora Doon.

Just as he arrived in sight of the dwelling he saw Cora Doon enter it.

For an hour Hal remained at his post. Then he was rewarded. He saw a man approaching whom he presently fancied was Roderick.

The man went to the door of Cora Doon's house, and Hal saw a colored woman let him in.

Some little time elapsed, during which Hal remained at his post; then the man whose identity he so strongly suspected, came out.

He slammed the door behind him, and Hal thought he was in a rare.

Hal caught a few of the burglar's muttered words, as he swiftly passed him in a doorway.

"I'll kill her yet, if I cannot win her! I've set my heart on Cora Doon, and now that old Mary can no longer help me with that gal, it seems I've no chance with her."

Hal waited until the burglar had proceeded for a short distance.

Then he set in to follow him.

Roderick went onward steadily, until he came to a shabby old tenement house, in a disreputable neighborhood. He entered this house as if he belonged there.

Hal decided at once that he had tracked his man to his lair.

Hal determined to return to the abode of Cora Doon, for he wished to warn her of the threat against her which he had heard her desperate admirer mutter.

When the young reporter arrived at Cora Doon's house he went straight to the door and rang the bell. The portal was at once opened by the girl whom he sought. She recognized Hal at a glance, and while she evinced some surprise at seeing him there, she invited him into the house.

Hal entered, and in a few words he made known what he had overheard Roderick say when he left the home of the strange girl so recently.

Then Cora Doon said:

"I fear that man, and I shall not feel safe until he is again behind prison bars. I believe he and old Mary shared a guilty secret."

Hal saw that the girl was not likely to confide anything more to him then, and so he soon bade her good-night and left her.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BOY REPORTER FINDS THE STOLEN BOX.

The young reporter knew Tom Tatters usually made his home at the newsboys' lodging house, so he went there.

As he had hoped, Hal found his street boy friend at the institution.

The urchin readily assented when Hal asked him to take a walk.

On the street Tom hastened to say:

"You've got a job for me."

"You have read my expression aright, Tom. Now listen."

Hal went on and made known how he had at last located Roderick, and that he wished to secure the stolen tin box.

"It's my plan to get into the house in which Roderick rooms by way of the roof. There's a door in the roof, of course, and the roof is flat and on a level with the rest of the roofs in the block. A Chinaman runs a den for opium smokers on the top floor of a house three doors below the tenement in which I've located Roderick. I know the Chinaman isn't particular about knowing the people who come to his place to hit the pipe, and we can get in. Then we'll watch for a chance to gain the roof unseen. Once we do that, we'll go to the roof of the house we want to enter secretly. If we find the roof door there fastened we have got to get it open somehow, and I shall go provided with the necessary tools."

"I'm wid yer."

An hour later they gained admission to the Chinaman's den, on the top floor of the house of which Hal had spoken, and the Chinaman secretly questioned them. The place was full of opium fiends. Hal and Tom secured pipes. But, before they were compelled to smoke much, they found a chance to creep out of the den unobserved, and to creep up a short flight of stairs to the roof of the building.

Soon they reached the roof of the tenement of the house in which Hal had located Roderick. They found the roof door unlocked.

In their stocking feet, Hal and Tom Tatters went noiselessly down the stairs which led from the roof and reached the upper floor of the house.

Having reached a closed door, with Tom Tatters close at his heels, Hal paused and listened. No sound came from within. Hal tried the door. It yielded. He pushed the door ajar, and looked into the room. He saw a rudely furnished interior. There was a cot bed in a corner, but it was unoccupied. At the side of the bed stood an iron bound trunk. A glance convinced Hal there was no one in the room.

"Remain here in the hall and watch."

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REGULAR SELLING PRICE \$200.00

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AND IS NOW RUNNING

The five readers who send us the largest number of coupons cut from "Happy Days," beginning with No. 787 and ending with No. 798, will each get an

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It is a high-grade machine, guaranteed by the manufacturer to be of $3\frac{1}{2}$ horse-power, and capable of a speed of 45 miles per hour. SEE CURRENT NUMBERS OF "HAPPY DAYS" FOR A FULL DESCRIPTION. Don't miss this chance to get a motorcycle for nothing. ANYBODY CAN ENTER THIS GREAT CONTEST.

BEGIN NOW!

BEGIN NOW!

Get as many coupons as you can and save them until the contest closes. Then we will notify you in "Happy Days" when to send them to us. The names and addresses of the winners will be published in the paper, with the number of coupons they send in.

In case of a tie among those who send us the largest number of coupons, a motorcycle identical in value will be given to each contestant so tied.

THIS IS A FAIR AND SQUARE CONTEST

EVERYBODY HAS AN EQUAL CHANCE TO WIN

Get the Coupons?

Get the Coupons?

TRY TO WIN A MOTORCYCLE

Tom whispered an assent. Then Hal entered the burglar's room.

The venturesome reporter lost no time in trying the lid of the strongly-made trunk, and as he anticipated, he found it secured. Before going to find Tom Tatters that night, Hal had provided himself with the tools which he thought he might need to open the roof door with.

He now made use of these implements.

Finally Hal got the trunk open. A quantity of garments first met his sight in the trunk.

At the bottom of the trunk he found the stolen box. It was locked. But the weight of it assured him it was well filled.

He did not pause to try to force the lid of the tin box, but without a moment's delay he glided out of the room, and in the hall he found Tom Tatters waiting for him.

They made their way to the street by the same course they took in coming. Hal left Tatters and proceeded to a police station. At his request several detectives were sent to watch the house where Hal had been. Hal then left for home.

Scarcely had he turned the corner, when he abruptly halted.

"This is luck, I'm inclined to think, for surely the two women who are going rapidly along yonder are Jennie Harlow and Cora Doon!" exclaimed Hal, under his breath.

He set in to follow the pair whom he had so quickly recognized, but it seemed the two girls had not observed him. He kept them in sight after that, and followed them on foot and upon street and "L" cars.

It soon appeared to him that they were probably bound for Harlem, and he suspected their destination was the private asylum, to which, as we have seen, he had previously traced

Jennie and her girlish helper. Hal was right in this. He finally followed the two girls from an "L" train to the asylum.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

Along the high wall which surrounded the asylum yard, Hal followed his sweetheart and Cora Doon.

At length Cora Doon, who preceded Jennie, paused before the little door in the rear wall, and as Jennie paused beside her, Cora rapped lightly upon the door.

This time the door opened as soon as Cora rapped, and the same tall, gaunt woman whom Hal had seen meet the girls there on a preceding night again came through the portal.

This time Hal took the risk of discovery in order to approach near the door. He crept along in the shadows near the wall, until he was near enough to hear what passed between the group at the door.

He first heard the woman from the asylum say:

"To-night the way is clear for you to see the man in whom you are so deeply interested, and if he proves to be the person you think he is, I believe you can escape with him by this door, for the head doctor is away, and the two men he employs as keepers are well on in their cups, for as housekeeper, I have seen that the wine closet was left open for them."

"Then lead us into the asylum," said Jennie, quickly.

"Yes, and I'll leave the door here unlocked, to facilitate your flight, in case you should have to make a run for it to escape," responded the woman.

Then she led the two girls through the door in the wall, and a little time after the portal was closed Hal stole to it. He pushed the door open softly, and glided into the asylum yard.

There he waited impatiently, while he dreaded lest some harm might befall Jennie in the asylum, despite the assurances of the woman who was employed there.

Meanwhile, the guide of the devoted daughter and her friend conducted them into the asylum.

At the door of a room on the ground floor the asylum woman paused and said:

"This is the room of the man without a name."

In a moment the asylum woman opened the door.

Jennie looked into a small, lighted room, and she saw a pale-faced, gray-haired man. Instantly she uttered a low, glad cry, and springing into the room, she threw her arms about the neck of the occupant, murmuring:

"Father! Father! Don't you know me? I am your daughter Jennie!"

"I don't know you, no, I don't know you," he said, and his tones were pitiful.

Then Jennie led the long lost man out of the room.

Meanwhile, Hal had not left his position near the gate in the asylum yard.

At length he saw four dark forms coming from the building in the yard, and as they drew nearer, he saw that one of them was a man.

Hal believed that Jennie's noble mission was accomplished. He waited until Jennie and her father came up. Then he revealed his presence, and his beloved exclaimed gladly: "I am glad you are here! Now I need no longer keep the secret to which Cora Doon pledged me, for this man is my father!"

"Make haste and get out of the yard," then said the asylum woman.

As they proceeded toward the "L" station, Hal explained how he came to be there, and then Cora Doon said:

"I must now make my conduct clear to you. Old Mary, the fortune teller, was really my aunt. Formerly she was employed at the asylum from which we have just come. After Jennie saved me from the fate of a suicide, I learned from Aunt Mary—whose conscience sorely troubled her at times, that, while she was at the asylum a man was secretly brought there one night, insensible, and with a wound in his skull. She said a desperado, named Roderick, whom she had once helped in a robbery, brought the man there. She listened to him and the head doctor talking, and so she learned the wounded man was the victim of a criminal plot, that if he lived, he was to be kept a prisoner in the asylum. Some time after Aunt Mary confided this to me, she came to me, much excited, and told me she had seen a girl who looked enough like the unknown wounded man, to be his daughter. She also told me the name of the girl to whom she alluded was Jennie Marlow. Hearing the name of my best friend, I at once resolved to tell her. But previously, Aunt Mary had bound me to secrecy regarding the man in the asylum. But to help the girl who had saved my life, I broke the promise which I had made Aunt Mary. I told Jennie all, and I agreed to help her gain a chance to see the captive of the asylum. But I first bound her to keep the matter a secret from every living soul, until he had made sure of the identity of the prisoner. Then I managed to win the present housekeeper of the asylum over to our side, and she told me the prisoner, whose identity we suspected, had lost his memory. I laid my plans, and what we have done to-night is the result."

An hour later the party arrived at Jennie's home, and there the wife, who had so long mourned for her lost husband, had welcomed him joyfully, despite her natural sorrow at learning his mind was almost a blank.

At Jennie's house Hal opened the broker's tin box and he found it contained letters from the asylum doctor, which proved that Jerome Cadman had paid him well to detain James Marlow as a patient at the asylum.

The following day James Marlow was, by Hal's advice, placed under treatment by the most successful specialist in the treatment of mental diseases in New York.

Hal learned early that day of the capture of Roderick the preceding night.

The reporter saw Roderick in his prison cell, and by assuming to know much more about how James Marlow came to be at the asylum than he really did, he finally induced Roderick to make a confession.

The burglar stated that on the day when Marlow was sent to Wall Street with fifty thousand dollars, the bank messenger was enticed into Jerome Cadman's office. There the broker knocked Marlow on the head, and robbed him of the money belonging to the bank. At first the broker thought Marlow was dead, but finding that he yet lived, he had that night hired Roderick to carry his victim to the private asylum. In conclusion, Roderick admitted that he had stolen the tin box in order to use the letters written by the asylum doctor to blackmail Cadman.

Armed with this confession, Hal secured the arrest of Cadman, and his office was fully searched for evidence relative to the Marlow case. During this search Hal found some Western newspapers, in which was an advertisement marked with pencil, stating that a fortune left by one Samuel Marlow, of Denver, Colorado, to the heirs of James Marlow, whose place of residence was unknown, awaited a claimant.

From Jennie and her mother, Hal learned that Samuel Marlow, of Denver, was undoubtedly the brother of James Marlow, but that they supposed he had been killed in the mines years before.

Later, the reporter set on foot legal proceedings to secure the fortune left by Jennie's uncle for the young girl and her mother.

Not long after this Hal heard that a New York daily newspaper, which had run down through bad management was offered for sale at a low figure. So, mindful of the offer made him by young De Peyster, he went to the wealthy gentleman and told him he had a plan to buy the paper alluded to. De Peyster agreed to advance the money and to become Hal's silent partner in the venture. Less than a week after that Hal found himself editor and proprietor of a newspaper of his own, and one of the first things he did was to give Tom Totters a good job.

In due time the fortune of the Denver miner was paid over to Mrs. Marlow for her daughter and herself. Meanwhile, a surgical operation performed upon the skull of Jennie's father happily resulted in his restoration to all his mental facilities.

At the trial of Jerome Cadman, James Marlow appeared as a witness, and the broker was convicted of robbery and murderous assault.

When Hal saw that the success of his newspaper venture was assured, he induced Jennie to name the happy day, and they were quickly married.

THE END.

Read "LITTLE BUFFALO BILL, THE BOY SCOUT OF THE RIO DEL NORTE," by An Old Scout, which will be the next number (604) of "Pluck and Luck."

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THINGS OF INTEREST.

Friend—You've never been called in consultation, have you?
Young Doctor—No, but I'd like to be. It's nice to charge ten times as much as the other doctor for saying that you don't know any more about the case than he does.

"What's your husband doing now?" asked the neighbor.
"Oh, he's sitting around telling what is going to happen next election," answered the busy woman. "Then he's a prophet?"
"No, he isn't. So far as this family is concerned he is a dead loss."

Mrs. Malaprop—"Young Sharp will have to apologize before I'll speak to him again."
"Miss Interest—"Did he insult you?"
Mrs. Malaprop—"Did he? The last time I met him I told him that my uncle, Lord de Style, had locomotive atacksia, and he had the impudence to ask if he 'whistled at crossings.' He's an unsympathetic brute."

"Look, mamma, at the nice big hole I cut out of the dollar bill Uncle Ned gave me!" gleefully cried little Bobby, holding up the mutilated long-green for his mother's inspection. "Oh, you young villain!" exclaimed mamma, "what did you do that for?" "Why," said Bobby, tearfully, "only yesterday I heard papa tell Mr. Galey that every night he went to the club he made a big hole in a ten-dollar bill!"

A story is told of a Frenchman who was very anxious to see an American business man at his home. The first morning when he called at the house the maid replied to his query: "The master is not down yet," meaning downstairs. The following morning he called again, and was met with: "The master is not up yet," meaning that he had not yet arisen from his bed. The Frenchman, looking at her with doubtful eye, paused a few seconds. "Eet ees very deefcult, but eef ze mademoiselle will tell me when ze master will be neither up nor down, but in ze middle, zen I vill call at zat time."

He was selling suspenders on the street, but he declared that, in his palmy days, he had been Prof. Piccolomini, the lion tamer. "What made you give it up?" he was asked. "Well, you see, it was this way. Once I was engaged to tame a lion called Frederick Barbarossa, who was certainly a wild proposition. But I was equal to the task. By slow and gradual steps I taught Frederick good manners. I used to walk into his cage, snap a whip, make him do stunts, and all that

sort of thing. Everything went along beautifully. But I got into trouble when I tried to teach Frederick to eat out of my hand." "How?" "Why, he ate three fingers out of my hand, confound him! Have a pair of Gem suspenders? They work without hitching. Twenty-five cents."

An interesting bridge, said to have been built by Indians, is situated about 200 miles east of Prince Rupert, B. C., near the proposed line of the Grand Trunk Railway. It is built of round poles, fastened together with telegraph wire and wooden pins, the floor being the only part where nails were used to any extent, and no two joints are made alike, but it seems to do the work required of it, that is, as a means for pack trains to cross Bulkley River. Looking at it from a distance, it seems to be nothing but a collection of poles and wire stuck together any way, with no particular reason for its not falling; the floor is very uneven, and the joints of the different members are made by lapping and binding them with wire. But by looking at it closely a person can see that the party who built it had a pretty good idea of engineering, for the bridge is an ingenious combination of cantilever and suspension construction.

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

First Male Thing—I threw a kiss to a girl the other day.
Second Male Thing—What did she say then? First Male Thing—She told me that I was the laziest man she ever saw.

Brown—Here is young Smith. Miss Robinson, I am going to introduce you. Miss Robinson—Oh, thanks. He has quite a delicate wit, has he not? Brown—Delicate is hardly the word. Sickly would fit it better.

Sweet Singer—Did you notice the new diamonds in my ears?
Comedian—Yes, they are very large, and attract a great deal of attention. Sweet Singer—Thank you. Comedian—I mean the ears.

They were out in the grove searching for walnuts. "You may have heard it before," he whispered, "but once more I must say I love you." "I'm looking for walnuts," she said with a sweet smile, "not chestnuts."

"The Scotch," said Secretary Wilson, of the Department of Agriculture, "are certainly a witty people. Now, there was a visitor in the little town of Bowdoin who, on looking about, saw no children, but only grown men and women. He wondered at this, and finally, meeting a weazened old man on the street, inquired, 'How often are children born in this town?' 'Only once,' the man replied, as he proceeded on his way.

At a recent convention of advertising men in Louisville, one of the delegates who lives in the West told a story of having met a man from New York. "Where are you from?" inquired the New Yorker. "Los Angeles," said the man from California. "Oh, I see," exclaimed the Empire State inhabitant. "So you're from the West. Well, I've been West some myself. Now last year I was out as far as Cleveland and stopped awhile at Pittsburg. I was all around out West." "Is that so?" said the man from Los Angeles with a great show of interest. "Well, I was up East myself not so very long ago. I was in Denver and Salt Lake City and all around. It's strange we didn't meet."

THE TIDAL TRAIN

By ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG.

There was a great rush for the tidal train that morning from Paris. It started at a very convenient hour, 9:40, and was patronized by a crowd of people. Mosso was there, of course, in fine form, fur-coated, although summer was already come; but the fur coat is de rigueur with the traveling Gaul, no less than the courier bag slung over the shoulder, and the modest portmanteau of dirty white canvas containing a still more modest allowance of linen of the same ambiguous color. Americans, too, returning from a tour through Europe and a lengthened halt in Paris; our own compatriots in every variety; eads, captains, countesses; a bridal pair homeward, no longer blushing self-conscious, but unmistakably bored; several sets of exclusive people, who, somehow, had secured a *caisse louée* to their two or three selfish selves.

As the time for departure approached there was the usual outcry for seats. The French officials, if asked, shrugged their shoulders and pointed to the nearest carriage; what they meant was that there was still room and to spare if people did not cover up extra seats with their belongings, and so monopolize more than their share. Late arrivals thus neglected wandered miserably up and down the whole length of the train, seeking accommodation excitedly, and in vain.

Among the rest were two ladies, one of whom, the elder, seemed greatly flurried and put out. "I knew how it would be," she cried, in a despairing voice; "every seat is occupied! What shall we do? Why were we so late?"

"We shall find places presently, dear Lady Jones," replied the younger, who had the rather sycophantic air of a humble friend. "The guard will help us."

"They never do, and they don't understand. Dear, dear! why didn't we come in time? It was all your fault, Hester"—this to the maid who followed them as they ranged backward along the platform—"you ought to have packed last night. What shall we do? Oh, thank you so much!" she cried, suddenly, with effusion.

A gentleman, who apparently had been watching her distress, pushed open the door of the carriage he occupied and invited her to enter. His companion, another man at the far end, made room by removing rugs and bags, and presently Lady Jones, with a sigh of relief, sank back into the cushions. Then, with feminine selfishness, and forgetful of the trouble she had but just escaped, she proceeded to prevent anyone else from getting in.

"Cover up the seats well, Millicent," she cried, "and do keep the door shut. Oh, thank you, sir," she added, to one of the men, who seemed to fall in readily with her idea of keeping the carriage to themselves.

There was nothing very remarkable about Lady Jones' new-found friends. One was a tall, dark man, with a clean-shaven face, and very dark eyes which glared out from under the shade of a black felt hat; the other was smaller—a restless little freckle-faced man, with a short red beard cut and trimmed to a point. They did not look like Englishmen; but they spoke the language fluently, with a slight American accent.

The firm, somewhat fierce demeanor of the dark man had the desired effect. When he said abruptly, "*Il n'y pas de place*," people retired, discomfited, and as time was nearly up, Lady Jones began to hope that their privacy and comfort would not be disturbed. Almost at the last moment a man came to the door, importunate and persistent.

"Any room?" he asked in English, as he stood on the doorstep. Then, getting no answer, he repeated the question in

French. "How many are you?" Still no answer; so he counted for himself, and went away.

Lady Jones was delighted; but her triumph was of short duration. The last arrival came back at once with a whole posse of French officials at his back, the chief of whom, in a voice of authority, repeated the inquiry:

"How many are you? Four? More to come? Impossible! The train is starting. *Entrez, monsieur; entrez, vite*;" and the next minute the stranger was bundled into the carriage, the door was shut with a bang, the horns sounded and the train went off at express speed.

The occupants of the carriage, Lady Jones in particular, resented this unceremonious intrusion.

"Extraordinary!" she said, in a loud aside to Millicent. "People never know when they are in the way."

"So forward and presuming!" replied the young lady.

"In my country," said the dark American, "men never intrude themselves on ladies. They wait to be asked."

"We have a very short way of settling with them if they do," added the short man, offensively.

"And pray, what do you do with them?" asked the last-comer, quietly.

"Pitch them out of the window, or on to the line."

"Would you like to do it now?" said the other.

"Be quiet, Thady," interposed the dark man; "remember there are ladies present."

"Don't mind me, gentlemen, if you wish to give him a lesson," said Lady Jones, who had espoused the part of her first friends.

The Englishman looked at her rather keenly, but made no remark. Nor, although they continued to talk to him and about him for the next half hour, did he take any further notice of them, but read a novel attentively which he had extracted from his little black bag.

By the time they reached Amiens quite a pleasant intimacy had sprung up between Lady Jones and the Americans. The four went to the buffet and breakfasted together. Returning to their carriage, they found that the Englishman had disappeared, so they made merry at his expense.

"Quite a common man," remarked Lady Jones.

"Probably a bagman," added Millicent.

But they had not done with him yet. He was there on the quay as the train ran alongside the Boulogne steamer; they saw him again on board with his little handbag, and always calm and imperturbable. Only once did he betray the slightest emotion; it was when a man came up to him as he stood near the funnel, and, with an almost imperceptible salute, addressed him as Mr. Hopkinson.

"Hush, you fool!" he replied, angrily. "Don't mention names here."

It was too late, however; many of those around had heard the name, and among the rest the two Americans, who were smoking close by.

"Come aft, Thaddeus," whispered the tall man. "Did you hear that name?"

"I did, by thunder! It must be that murderous villain himself."

The steamer being very crowded, Lady Jones and her party had been unable to secure a private cabin. They had to stay on deck, and in by no means a good place. But, thanks to the attention of her American friends, Lady Jones was made comfortable with rugs and wraps near one of the paddleboxes, while Millicent and the maid sat close beside her. The voyage across the Channel was not good, and the ladies reached Folkestone in a more or less battered condition. Now the Americans, like chivalrous gentlemen, came out in their true colors. Nothing could exceed their kindness. They took infinite trouble to prepare the party for going on shore; they

helped the maid to fold and strap up the rugs, and made themselves generally useful. Lady Jones was so grateful and so charmed that she begged them to call on her in London, and gave them her address.

When the porters rushed on board, Lady Jones desired one of them to go at once and secure her a carriage.

"Can't be done, mum," he replied. "All the things have to be examined before they let us through to the train."

"Absurd!" said her ladyship. "They won't examine mine. I am Lady Jones."

But her ladyship was no better than an ordinary person before the law. The Custom House officers were inexorable, and in spite of her protests all her small parcels and those of her party were taken into the search room and laid out on the counter. With an imperious wave of the hand an official ordered her to follow them. To make matters worse, the quiet Englishman to whom she had been so rude in the train was standing there at the doorway talking to two other men, and laughing, as she thought, at her distress.

For the moment her two American friends were nowhere to be seen.

"It is preposterous, disgraceful! Sir John shall write to the papers—I beg your pardon?"

This to an official, who had said to her twice, "What is this?"

A small parcel done up in strong brown paper securely tied and sealed.

"I haven't the least idea. Something of my maid's or Millicent's—this young lady here. I really cannot say."

But while she chatted on with accustomed garrulity the Custom House officer had already cut the strings, undone the parcel, and laid bare a small, plain tin case.

It had a lid, which was easily opened. Inside were a number of slabs of a whity-brown, sugary-looking substance, which might have been tenth-rate chocolate or indifferently made "toffee."

"Some sort of sugar," said Lady Jones. "How odd! I cannot imagine——"

"It's just what I expected," said a quiet voice behind. "Hand it over, Mr. Saunders. This is my affair."

"What, Mr. Hopkinson, are you here?"

"Very much on the spot this time, I think, Mr. Saunders. Now, ma'am,"—to Lady Jones—"where are your other friends?"

"How dare you speak to me?" she replied hotly, recognizing her old enemy of the train. "I am Lady Jones."

"Of course, all right," replied the man called Mr. Hopkinson. "But there," he went on, half to himself, "we don't want any scandal or noise. We might lose the others," and with that he whispered a few words to an attendant and drew back into the crowd.

The examination of Lady Jones' baggage was completed. Everything was repacked, and the party proceeded toward the train. Just as they passed the refreshment room a railway guard came up, and, touching his cap, said: "The station-master has reserved you a compartment. Please come this way."

Within five minutes the two ladies were stored away in a carriage by themselves and the door securely locked. Presently the train ran out of the station up the hill to Folkestone Town, and Lady Jones, who was rapidly recovering her equanimity, after a few ejaculations of delight at being home again, composed herself to sleep in a corner of the carriage.

But fresh annoyance was in store for her. At Folkestone Town station the carriage was unlocked and three men got in; one of them, to Lady Jones' indignation and dismay, was Mr. Hopkinson, with his black bag, which he kept on his knee.

"You mustn't come in here," she said, loftily; "this carriage is reserved specially for me. I am Lady Jones."

"My name is Hopkinson, I am chief inspector of police from Scotland Yard."

"Well," said Lady Jones, still bold, but with much inward misgiving, "I really do not understand."

"By this time my men will have arrested your two confederates—your friends who helped you in trying to keep me out of the train at Paris. I knew them all along."

"My friends! I never met them before this morning! Why, I don't even know their names!"

"That won't do. You know as well as I do that they are Phelim Cassidy and Thaddeus O'Brien, American Fenians——"

"I deny it most positively! I—I——"

"Case is too strong against you. Why, the stuff was found in your possession, and I have it here in my bag; enough to wreck the whole train."

Lady Jones shrieked.

"Do you mean to tell me that there is dynamite here in this carriage? Oh, do please throw it away!"

"The concussion would certainly explode it, and we should all be blown to kingdom come! Don't be frightened; you traveled with it all the way from Paris, and would have carried it on to London yourself."

"I assure you I know nothing of all this. I am Lady Jones, the wife of Sir John Jones, of Harley street. Millicent, help me to explain to him who I am."

The detective shook his head doubtfully.

"It may be as you say; but I don't quite see my way. Wait till we get to London. If you can prove your identity, at any rate you may escape being locked up; the magistrates may give you bail."

With this cold comfort Lady Jones had to be satisfied, and in dire terror and discomfort she made the rest of the journey to London. Hopkinson, it must be confessed, had already made up his mind that it was as Lady Jones had said; but he chose to keep her in suspense.

On reaching Cannon street, the guard brought him a telegram. The detective read it with strong symptoms of disgust.

"Slipped through my fingers! Just when I thought I had them, too. It's the very mischief. What shall I do next?"

After a pause of deep thought he turned suddenly to Lady Jones.

"Do these men know your London address? Yes. Well, if you will assist us now, I think I can promise that nothing more shall be said about this unfortunate affair. But first, you must be secret, silent as the grave. Can I trust you? And this young lady?"

Millicent and Lady Jones answered in a breath, promising to be most circumspect.

"My idea now is that these scoundrels only planted the stuff on you, hoping it would pass unnoticed; whether it did or not they would know by the morning papers, which would be sure to publish an account of the seizure of dynamite. Well," went on the detective, "no one must know a syllable of this; there shall be nothing in the papers, or anywhere. Tomorrow or next day they will call at your house to recover their small parcel, explaining that it slipped in among your rugs by mistake. If they do, we have them; do you understand? And will you help?"

Lady Jones only too gladly assented.

That night the house in Harley street was practically in the possession of the police. Sir John entered into the spirit of the thing; gave his hall porter a holiday, and installed Hopkinson disguised in his place. On the third day the dark American called, sent up his card and was given the dynamite. As he left the house his red-headed companion joined him, and both were arrested before they had turned the next corner.

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